


# INTO THE FROZEN SOUTH

SCOUT MARR  
of the QUEST  
Expedition



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**INTO THE FROZEN SOUTH**

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

*IN the beginning it was the intention of Sir Ernest Shackleton to give Scout Marr the benefit of his guiding hand in the writing of this book; and indeed up to within a few days of the great explorer's death, he spent many moments in talking it over with Marr, and incidentally gave valuable hints as together they went over the Scout's notes of his observations. In this way the framework of the book may be said to have been laid down by Sir Ernest, and the earlier chapters bear the impress of his kindly advice as well as the reinforcement of his wide and wise experience.*

*From the sad moment of his death the narrative was continued by Scout Marr, and then when the MS. was completed, the young author's work was given the valued editorial overlook of so experienced a writer of the things of the sea as Captain Frank H. Shaw.*

*In this way the book grew into its present form, and may be considered the more acceptable insomuch as it reflects the personality of the "Boss," and is, moreover, just one more instance of his comradely spirit toward one on the threshold of life.*





*Photo: Topical.*

Raising the Union Jack given by King George V to the **Quest**.  
(Scout Marr is Hoisting the Left Signal Halyard.)

# Into the Frozen South

By SCOUT MARR, of the *Quest*  
Expedition *With Twenty-nine Half-tone Illustrations*



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FUNK AND WAGNALLS COMPANY

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To  
JOHN QUILLER ROWETT

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# INTO THE FROZEN SOUTH

## CHAPTER I

### Hope Realized

It was difficult to believe that I stood a fighting chance of being chosen as one of that band of gallant adventurers bound for the Frozen South. Hope ran high when it was made known to me that I was among the ten candidates who were to be inspected by Sir Ernest Shackleton; but, even so, my heart misgave me. True enough, we ten had been weeded out of thousands who had applied, in response to the wide appeal published in the early summer of 1921, for volunteer Scouts to accompany the famous explorer on what promised to be an ideal adventure; but that such good fortune as came would be mine was wellnigh incredible.

Yet the miracle happened. A dream grew into reality. Together with Scout Norman E. Mooney, of the Orkney Islands, I was selected as one of the crew of that famous *Quest* which, driven by the compelling determination of Sir Ernest Shackleton, was to attempt to penetrate the Antarctic fastnesses, and to explore not only those icy wastes, but also certain little-known islands in the sub-Antarctic seas.

Imagine how my heart leaped when the news was told! Here was romance personified. I think that any youth of my age would have felt with me that all the adventure books ever written were but tame affairs

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as compared with what the future promised. We were to follow in the footsteps of brave men who had dared much; of men who had died because of their love of perilous adventure. Anything might happen; imagination filled in the coming years with pictures that set the mind alive with delight.

Oh, yes, it was good to be young and ambitious—and chosen! The doors were to be closed for indefinite years on England—commonplace England, as I thought it then—and our ship was to bear us, high of heart, clear across the threshold of adventure.

Often and often had I thought how splendid it would be to visit those wastes of snow and ice and furious seas. Like every other healthy British lad, the hot blood of desire to achieve ran in my veins. And here were my biggest dreams coming true. Fill in the blanks for yourselves.

I was glad to think that my lot was to be cast amongst such tried and proven men as Sir Ernest Shackleton and Mr. Frank Wild. Every boy has his private heroes. Shackleton was one of mine. Moreover, I, a landsman, was to learn the craft of the sea, and under the most fascinating circumstances imaginable. I thought of Drake, Hawkins and all those hardy adventurers of the past. I was one of them!

My first meeting with Sir Ernest Shackleton did nothing to lessen my enthusiasm, for he satisfied my imagination most completely. Here was a man to be followed anywhere—everywhere; a man whom it would be a great thing to serve. A tall, broad man, with a strong, determined mouth, a man whose smile gave confidence, whose voice seemed always to be laughing at danger. A full-sized man, judged by any standard, though his great shoulders carried a just perceptible bend, as token of the heavy burden laid upon him by his gallant struggles and endeavours of former years.

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Naturally enough, when face to face with him this first time, I had little to say. But he possessed the ability to size one up almost at a glance.

"Why do you want to go?" he asked crisply.

"I want to *do* something," I said. It was a period when every right-thinking boy felt he must do something to be worthy of the sacrifices of Britain's dead in the recently ended war. I wanted to say all this, yet words failed to come; but Shackleton read right enough and smiled. I was chosen, and even to this day I cannot understand why. My lucky star had climbed into the zenith, I suppose.

There is really no need for me to record that I counted myself the luckiest fellow on earth, nor to declare how strenuously I vowed myself to loyal and helpful performance of all such duties as should come my way. I wanted to be worthy of my companions. Here were men who had flocked to a well-loved leader's standard from all the ends of the earth; and I was chosen to stand beside them!

Once the decision was made, the days were full of anticipation. They seemed tedious and endless, because, being committed, I wanted to tread the *Quest's* planking and feel that it was all really true. There were so many things that might happen, so many chances of misadventure. However, fortune stood my friend; the appointed hour arrived. Not that those final farewells to loving friends were pleasant, but high resolve made light of them. Others had dared the long out trail that's everlastingly new; and homesickness is no fatal disease.

Nevertheless, let me be honest and say that my first sight of the *Quest* somewhat tarnished the gilt of the gingerbread. She seemed so very tiny to be destined for so great an adventure—merely a minnow amongst whales compared with other craft. Still, I doubt

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if any power on earth could have tempted me to draw back.

Mooney and I joined ship on September 15, 1921, and I was allotted a bunk in the little mess-room in the ship's after-end. Cramped quarters enough, make no mistake on that head. The *Quest* was no leviathan, and personal comfort was a thing that seemed to have been left out of her controller's calculations. So much for first impressions. If I had had previous sea experience I might, at that first glance, have counted my quarters almost luxurious. For in addition to the actual sleeping-place, at least as roomy as a coffin, I was granted a locker beneath for clothes and a shelf for the careful stowing of trifling personal belongings. This was my stateroom de luxe. At first it seemed so tiny, so stuffy, so generally uncomfortable, that I wondered how any human being, not to mention a well-grown youth of my proportion, could exist there; but the time was to come when I should consider this corner of a seagoing ship the most desirable spot in all the world for my seagoing requirements, and count the minutes until I was able to fling myself full-length into that seven-by-two sleeping shelf to sink into the dreamless slumber that rewards hard toil.

Aboard a Polar exploration ship there is scant room for luxury. Every available inch of space must needs be crammed with gear that is to further the expedition's interests. The human side of things is apt to be lost sight of by those who have the greater vision, and who understand, as our leader understood, the amazing adaptability of mankind.

Not that Mooney and myself were called upon at once to "render down" into these cramped quarters. Probably with an idea of tempering the wind to the shorn lamb, Mr. John Quiller Rowett, who, by reason of his personal admiration for Sir Ernest Shackleton,





Sir Ernest Shackleton and Mr. John Quiller Rowett.



The *Quest's* Goodly Company of Adventurers.

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was responsible for financing the expedition, took us under his comforting wing and gave us a great time at his Sussex home, Ely Place, Frant.

In my opinion Mr. Rowett deserves a high place in the records of Polar exploration. The bravest adventurers imaginable cannot fare forth in quest of the unknown without monetary backing; born adventurers, by reason of their very indomitableness, seldom have sufficient capital to finance their expeditions. If the *Quest* was to be a cannon ball designed to thrust herself into the frozen fastnesses of the South, Mr. Rowett unquestionably supplied the powder that fired her on that lengthy journey. Expecting nothing in return for his very considerable outlay, satisfied to know that he was helping a courageous man towards the realization of his ambition, Mr. Rowett cheerfully provided the major part of the funds for this, Shackleton's last adventure, out of considerations of personal friendship for our leader and in the general interests of scientific research.

## CHAPTER II

### London's Good-bye

ON Saturday, September 17, precisely at one o'clock, Sir Ernest Shackleton gave the word to cast off, and the *Quest* started from St. Katharine's Dock, Tower Bridge, on her journey across the foamy leagues. Enthusiastically she endeavoured to celebrate the occasion by a stentorian blast on her whistle; but no matter how diligently the lanyard was tugged, nothing beyond a hoarse moan resulted. The watching crowd, realizing the intention, cheered resoundingly; and as if put on its mettle by this tribute of farewell, the whistle made another and more successful effort; a fairly creditable note resulted as the *Quest* was towed and warped out through the dock-heads into the open river. With the great Tower Bridge opened for us, as if we were a liner of repute instead of one of the stormy petrels of the sea, we passed up to London Bridge, where we swung about and then dropped down-stream under our own power.

We had a wonderful send-off. To me, unaccustomed to crowds, it was as though all London had conspired together to bid us a heartening farewell. Crowds and bigger crowds massed on the quays and the banks of the Thames. Both the Tower Bridge and London Bridge were packed with cheering people who clustered like flies. The bigger shipping in the river roared welcome and farewell to the little *Quest*; every siren was bellowing at its fullest blast, and our ineffective whistle was hard-set to make even a decent showing

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in reply, since the custom of the sea ordains that every signal given shall be scrupulously answered. Naturally the Press was strongly represented, writers and photographers alike; and since, in a way, we were public property, the whole ship's company posed for the pointing lenses, whilst Shackleton, desirous that those at home should hold a pleasant final record of us, kept us laughing broadly at his swift shafts of wit.

So much for the picturesque side of exploration; but as soon as we were fairly in the river, work began. Shifting stores is no pleasant job. Gunny-sacks that hold hard-tack rub the neck and arms unmercifully; cask-chines cut the fingers; every muscle in one's body collects its own individual ache, which joins with every other ache to create one enormous agony of pain; but it's a proud horse that won't carry its own nosebag, and during the journey down to Gravesend we put our backs into the commonplace but very necessary job. Probably enough, Nelson himself had shifted similar stores in his younger days, and he died an admiral! We realized—I know I did—that we were necessary to the general welfare of the cruise.

Anchored at Gravesend, Scout Mooney and myself were permitted no easement. That's the way of the sea, I found. She breaks in her disciples thoroughly at the beginning, so that none of her later surprises can astonish. Helping the cook prepare supper mightn't seem heroic, but it was necessary, for these shipmates of ours depended on us for their creature comforts on this occasion. Maybe enthusiasm overreached itself a little, for, serving the prepared meal at table, I contrived to spill hot coffee over the hand of one of our members. Scout lore teaches one early to be a philosopher, and here was an excellent opportunity of acquiring a working knowledge of the ready-for-use language employed on shipboard, to which we were

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initiated by the injured explorer's remarks. You don't hear language like that every day of your life!

Having served, Mooney and myself ate, and did it heartily. The sea creates an appetite all of its own; and I have not the slightest doubt that our attention to the victuals caused some concern in the minds of those responsible for the supplies of the ship. Then, full-fed and happy, we washed up the dishes and turned into our narrow berths and quickly fell into sleep, though the day had been memorable and full of mild excitements. Just before I dropped off, just as the varied aches and abrasions with which I had afflicted myself began to get in their fine work, I remembered those stentorian cheers that had wafted us down-river.

"Some of those were for *me!*" I thought. It made the labours seem light.

"All hands on deck!" was the cry that wakened me in the early morning of the Sabbath. There was a note of purpose in the cry, and no wonder. The *Quest* was dragging her anchors and running down to foul the rigging of a near-by steam hopper with her bowsprit. Darkness everywhere; a medley of men in pyjamas, and not yet familiarized with the geography of this, their latest home, some shouting; then a twang of snapping wires, a vast looming shadow sliding away into darkness, and we were clear, at cost of two of the steamer's stays, cut through by some opportunist. Evidently the sea did not permit of long, placid reveries; there was always something happening or about to happen once you got afloat. But after the moment's breathlessness my bunk seemed doubly inviting, and I was just getting accustomed again to being asleep when—six a.m. happened, four bells in the morning watch, and up we youngsters were roused to get breakfast for our seniors. By seven-thirty the *Quest* was already under way, and my first real misgivings

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troubled me. I, a landsman, had to minister to the needs of tried and tested seamen! Something of an ordeal, believe me; but it's a poor scout who fears to climb! I overcame my tremblings by dint of sheer determination, and no crockery was broken by being thrown at my devoted head that meal. Maybe the good spirit that animated all the company permitted them to overlook my crass deficiencies.

Not an heroic day this Sunday, my first at sea, by any means. We were at once initiated into that shipboard creed which dictates that, even if your ship be sinking, she must sink clean. Cleanliness aboard the *Quest*, as aboard most other ships flying British colours, ranks ahead of godliness. Mooney and I washed dishes, washed floors, washed everything that could be washed, by way of justifying our existences. We made the little ward-room, where ten of us all told eat and sleep and generally have our being, shine like silver. By tea time—still washing something—we reached Sheerness.

Now, a voyage such as lay before us is not a trifling affair of days or weeks, with the assurance of thoroughly equipped ports and dockyards under one's lee to comfort us. The *Quest* must needs be prepared for any hazard that might arise—and there were many to be anticipated. Divers came off and busied themselves with fitting copper plates to our hull, to form a suitable "earth" for the wireless installation. Oddments had to be secured from the shore, other oddments were returned. A new bowsprit was shipped. There was abundance of work for all hands; scant time for homesickness. So that the evening was upon us almost before we realized it; and since, even aboard ship, men must rest and take their pleasure, the cook accompanied us ashore to see the sights of Sheerness. The principal one was a picture house. We saw it, and

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when we'd seen it it was high time to renew friendship with our bunks.

Early in the voyage Mooney and I found the worth of systematic co-operation in our labours. In cramped quarters, over-packed with humanity, there must be a place for everything and a definite time for every duty. We put on our thinking-caps. At present we were having allowances made for us; but—even a youngster may be allowed to look into the future. A small ship, many men of varying temperaments, these might make for friction, and human nature being what it is, friction under such conditions is inevitable. I had heard of the chaos that can result aboard ship from discordant elements being present, and I decided at this early hour that blame for discord should not rest on me. Mooney and I seemed to have it in our power to lighten irksome days by swift and diligent service. We accordingly drew up a programme of duties, which answered very well. I attended to the table, Mooney washed up as the dishes came away from the board. All the ward-room crowd being fed, I assisted in that endless washing up; then, all utensils snugly stowed away in proper Bristol fashion, we combined to carry out such further duties as were required of us. In a surprisingly little while we'd reduced the thing to a fine art; and I firmly believe the senior members of the expedition hardly realized our presence, so automatically did the work proceed.

One good thing I discovered about hard work faithfully performed: it teaches you to enjoy pleasure. Tuesday evening found me ashore in Sheerness at a whist drive, with a dance to follow. There was room to breathe, room to stretch oneself. I enjoyed that evening very much. Ordinarily I might have been bored; but I'd earned the relaxation, I fancied, and I went into it with all my heart and soul. Yes, you



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can play very hard when you've worked hard to earn it.

On Wednesday morning the ship was taken out to the buoys to be swung for compass adjustment. Not posing as an experienced navigator, I am unable to describe this very necessary operation in detail; but I gathered that a ship's compass is about as uncertain an instrument as can be imagined. About the one place to which a compass needle doesn't point is the Pole. There are so many opposing forces at work to defeat—or is it deflect?—that slip of magnetized metal that the wonder is it doesn't give up the task in despair and point straight upwards to the spot where Paddy's hurricane came from. Apart from the wide difference between the magnetic poles and the true poles—and that is called variation—there are the wonderful effects of the metal contained in the ship—the immovable metal of her structure—and every shroud and every barrel hoop is some sort of a magnet; the other no less wonderful effects created by the ship's heeling and pitching, when what was previously horizontal magnetism becomes vertical magnetism; and a multitude of chancy irregularities that bewilder me when I think of them. However, the experts concerned in the matter contrived to reduce all these warring elements to something approaching order, and we left Sheerness with the conviction that whatever happened to the ship her compasses wouldn't fail. It was after lunch when we finally got our ground tackle and slid away towards the Channel, across a sea as flat and smooth as the ice of which we were later to see so much. Under such conditions, being at sea was about as pleasurable an experience as one could hope for. It was possible to get familiar with the thousand and one details of ship-board life which at first sight seem so baffling. Already, short as had been my time aboard, I had a sneaking

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belief that I could pass some sort of examination in seamanship.

Here's a chance now, with the *Quest* in open water, to say something about her. She was to serve as a stage for all the comedies and tragedies of the coming months, and she is worthy of as good a description as I am able to give. I said before she was no leviathan. In your mind's eye, you who read my impressions, please don't create a fancy ship, equipped with such gadgets as make ordinary seafaring a picnic. The *Quest*, originally a small Norwegian wooden barque of 125 tons, was mighty little bigger than a Thames barge. Her auxiliary steam engines developed one horse-power per ton, 125 h.p. in all. Ketch-rigged as she originally was, she was supposed to be capable of steaming seven knots per hour in smooth waters. Being originally intended for the Arctic sealing trade, she was naturally very strongly built in every respect, even at a sacrifice of room inboard. Her bow was solid oak sheathed stoutly with steel—capable of taking a very severe ice nip; her timbers were doubly reinforced by massive beams with natural bends. Give her an overall length of 111 feet from bow to taffrail, a beam of 23 feet or thereabouts, sides 24 inches in thickness, and there you have her, this twentieth-century Argosy of ours, as Shackleton bought her from her original owners.

She underwent a thorough overhauling prior to my joining her. She might have been much more thoroughly made-over but for the fact of certain strikes and restlessness amongst the dockyard workers. She might have been ridded of her steam engines and been fitted with Diesel oil engines; but this alteration was impossible. Consequently her already limited accommodation was still further limited by the creation of new bunker space—the forehold suffered here—which

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was estimated to give the *Quest* a working radius, allowing for the use of sail and economical steaming, of something like five thousand miles.

Her rigging was altered to a considerable extent. She was square-rigged forward, her mizenmast was lengthened, really in order to give the wireless aerial a chance; her 'thwartship bridge was thrown clear across the deck from rail to rail, and completely enclosed with Triplex glass windows. Her foredeck developed a curious growth in the shape of a deck-house as big as an average dining-room, twenty feet by twelve. This house was partitioned off into four small cabins and a room for housing special scientific instruments. New running rigging was fitted, also new canvas; and as Mr. Rowett was determined that every detail of the ship must be as perfect and safe as was possible, no matter what the expense might be, nothing was left undone that would assure her being eminently seaworthy.

Within her diminutive hull, twenty hands, picked from innumerable volunteers, were bestowed in very limited space, as might be imagined. She was, indeed, so packed with gear of one kind and another that I still wonder how her timbers stood the strain. Piecing together a jig-saw puzzle was child's play compared with the stowing of her equipment and stores; not a single inch of space was wasted anywhere.

She was fitted with two complete wireless installations; not merely receiving sets, but also transmitting gear. Moreover, she was lit throughout by electric light, at all events during the earlier stages of the voyage, but the need to economize in fuel later compelled the use of oil lamps everywhere. A great quantity of her sea stores and the equipment that would be required when in the Antarctic was sent ahead of her to Cape Town, to be kept in store, awaiting

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our arrival; but even so she was packed full; and the port alleyway was pretty completely blocked by the seaplane which we were carrying. Everything that human ingenuity could devise or demand was there in that little ship.

I have forgotten to mention the spirit of loyal determination of all aboard. There was enough to equip a whole armada of Dreadnoughts. What did cramped space and minor discomfort matter? We were going South with Shackleton, and that was enough for us. Everyone possessed good temper and the determination to rough it without outcry—about the most desirable qualifications for a crew on such a voyage.

Throughout the easy run to Plymouth there was nothing to disturb us; voyaging under these fine-weather conditions was glorious. We were all in high heart, adapting ourselves rapidly to the existing conditions; and the time flowed by with that curious smoothness so noticeable at sea.

By half-past nine on the morning of Wednesday, September 23, we sighted Plymouth and passed up through an almost empty Sound. Here the *Quest* was welcomed by the mayor and other notables, including Captain Gordon Campbell, V.C., the man who made himself such a terror to German submarines during the war. There were speeches—stirring speeches that exalted the courage and, so far as I was concerned, made me feel even more heroic than before, so that once again I thanked my lucky stars for the good fortune that had fallen my way.

Mooney and myself were given an extra special send-off on our own account, being invited ashore to a meeting of Scout officers of Plymouth, where a stirring address was given by Mr. Parr, who is chief of the Wolf Cubs in London. Then there was tea—we were

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the served, not servers! It was a thoroughly good blow out, and afterwards a sing-song worth thinking twice about, though all through the festivities Mooney and I were being pestered for our autographs in such a fashion as threatened to give us stiff wrists and swollen heads. Then they took us round Plymouth in taxi-cabs and showed us the place from which the *Mayflower* sailed on a journey that promised to be even more difficult than ours; yet Mooney and I thought scornful of *Mayflowers*, as Mulvaney thought scornful of elephants!

Until Saturday we lay at Plymouth. Prior to sailing we embarked two passengers, one temporary, Mr. Gerald Lysaght, who was invited to accompany us to Madeira; one permanent, in the shape of a very fine Alsatian wolf-hound puppy, presented to "The Boss" as a mascot. "Query," we called this pup, and, as usual aboard ship, he became a firm favourite with all hands. So now we were all complete. Mr. Rowett came down from London to see us off, and he gave us a joyful dinner. We moved off into the Sound, where our compasses underwent another careful testing; and as the ship swung round the circle she was surrounded by such swarms of small boats as seemed impossible of belief. We were a magnet to draw all water-going Plymouth that day, believe me. Drake himself never had such a send-off as we had, I swear.

This day was memorable for two reasons. First, the *Quest* made her real start on her southward journey; second, I took my first spell in a ship's stokehold, not as a spectator, but as a genuine working member of the black squad! There are some men, I believe, who consider stokehold work almost a pastime. I didn't. To learn to become an efficient stoker you must first acquire the art of coal-trimming. You go down into bunkers packed tight with coal, breathless caves below

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the waterline, where the stench of bilge is thick and clogging, and you shift coal to within easy reach of the men who are tending the fires. You breathe coal dust and you absorb coal dust at every pore. In a little while, if you persevere, you actually begin to *think* coal dust—it's everywhere. Coal is a very fine thing in its proper place—and that is on a fire—but the getting of it to the fire is an overrated sport. Coal dust as food leaves much to be desired; my mouth was full of it; so were my eyes and my ears and my hair and my nose and my lungs. Still, they say that ship's firemen are a healthy race, so there must be *some* good in coal dust after all. But, having shovelled and breathed and eaten sufficient of the black and unpalatable stuff, I was deemed qualified to serve the fires, and contrived to get on well enough for a beginner, though the heat was excellent preparation for a future existence. Not that I'm grumbling, observe; I am merely trying to set down my early impressions as they came to me. I registered a solemn vow during those hours that my ambition should carry me higher than a steamer's stokehold, or I'd know the reason why.

It was during this 12 to 4 engine-room watch of mine that the *Quest* got properly under way. Her second send-off, and a good one it was. Plymouth excelled itself that day. An Admiralty tug helped along the first lap of the journey, a comforting sight, for she was very much bigger than the *Quest*. Mr. Rowett and Mr. Stenhouse, who had remained aboard till the last possible minute, now left us with cordial farewells that made one feel uncommonly lumpy about the throat, and all hands manned ship to reply. We gave them our fiendish war-cry, its "music" devised, I think, by Captain Worsley: "Yoicks, tally-ho!" and gave it them again and again, until our throats

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were sore. Then quite suddenly, so it seemed, we were all alone, trudging down-Channel through a perfect evening, with a sea as smooth as polished glass, and busy porpoises welcoming us to the glory of deep water. And so, with the English land dimming into the evening mist, we were really up and away at last.

## CHAPTER III

### The Voyage Begins

THERE was a great deal to be done before settling down, however. The ship was so deep-laden with stores and equipment that every precaution was necessary in the event of our meeting bad weather. Our decks were still littered with every imaginable object under the sun. Lifeboats were crammed with supplies; ropes in coils, ropes in flakes, canvas in bolts, innumerable gadgets connected with science, art and the human stomach filled the planking. So it was "Lash up and stow" with a vengeance; for all this clutter had to be brought within reasonable bounds of safety, and until this was done steady rest was out of the question. My chief concern, I found, was to keep out of the way of more skilled seamen than myself. I was uncommonly willing, but a trifle lacking in ability, like the Irishman who tried to sound the depth of water in the ship's boilers by dropping a stone down the funnel at the end of a rope!

At midnight I went down to the stokehold again for another watch amongst the coal dust. They told me that the ship had been literally bombarded with wireless wishes from our countless friends. But for the coal dust I should have been as happy as a sand-boy; but you can't have everything, even when you're Antarctic-bound.

In the morning we saw the last of England, or rather the foam that guards old England, for the big seas breaking on the Scilly Isles and the Bishop Rock practically hid them from view. As a fair wind was



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blowing we stretched our canvas, and I tried to familiarize myself with the mysteries of a sailing-ship. I decided that I had a lot to learn that even scouting hadn't taught me. Ropes are queer things; they always seem to turn up where least expected; they always foul something just when they are most needed. Try for the first time to coil down a split-new rope that hasn't had its kinks taken out, and you'll understand what I mean.

I should like to draw a thick veil over what happened next. But even a Scout, selected for such an eventful experience as this, must bow his head to certain circumstances. Perhaps Neptune didn't quite understand how important an individual I was. At all events, the smell of the engine-room when next I went on watch at noon began to be afflicting. It hadn't been attar of roses before, but now——! They said it was because the *Quest* was so deep-laden that she rolled so much, but I wasn't concerned so much with causes as with effects. Those rolls seemed unending. At first I was afraid the ship would sink; later I was afraid she wouldn't!

More seasoned men—I wonder why seasickness is always considered amusing?—advised various remedies. To drink hot salt water steadily was one; to swallow salt pork at the end of a string was another. The best remedy proposed was hard work, so I clenched my teeth and resolved to stick it out. I had to be one up on Mooney, who had thrown up the sponge by now, as well as practically everything else. I will draw the veil.

Yet even when seasick it was possible to realize something of the splendour of the sea. Big ships went past, thrusting white water grandly before their bows, with gay-coloured bunting streaming from their spans to wish us the best of fortune. A noble windjammer,

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clothed in shimmering canvas from truck to rail, overhauled us, leaning to the strenuous breeze, with the dark shadows playing mysteriously in her bulging canvas and the foam flicking over her catheads. I was one of that goodly brotherhood, even though a sick one. It was my right to laugh at the whipping white-caps, though I hardly felt like laughing at anything. Never mind! Nelson was sick every time he left port, so who was I to complain?

At midnight I went down below again and got to work, though my stoking would not have won a prize. Since no one likes to admit that Neptune has beaten him, I deluded myself into believing that I had caught a chill by sitting in the cold air on deck after the stifling heat of the stokehold. Any excuse serves a victim to *mal de mer*! Then, too, there was the question of sea-legs. There were so many things to fall against, and most of them were either very hot or very sharp. The things one tried to grab when the ship took one of her soul-shifting rolls floated away out of reach; the floors were mostly on end, so that, without exaggerating, I decided that death could hold no greater terrors. Limp and sore and miserable, I found it difficult to stick it out through the watch; but by assuring myself that it wasn't really seasickness at all so much as that chill, I managed it, and crawled bunkwards feeling several times more dead than alive. No doubt I could have succumbed, thrown up the sponge, and let the unkindly sea have its way with me; but already, short as had been my sea service, I was beginning to learn the deep-water lesson that aboard a small ship every man counts, and that if one man shirks his job that same job must be divided amongst others who already have enough to do.

In my bunk I lay for eight forlorn hours, and then it was up again and down to that pestiferous stoke-

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hold, where the same programme was gone through. I told myself that I wasn't the only victim; others were perhaps even more miserable than myself. And here's a curious fact: if you think that it helps you to carry on. Queer, I admit, but it does. You have a sort of pride in your own powers of resistance. It gives you something to think of; and as they tell you that *mal de mer* is more a mental ailment than a physical, your mind can't concentrate quite so closely on its own woes. That's my opinion, anyhow, whatever others may think.

About now all available hands took part in coal trimming, and my labours were consequently lightened. Scout Mooney was clean out of the running, suffering ten times as much as I was. And then, by way of a bracer, came a welcome change in work. Instead of shovelling coal I was set on to scrubbing and cleaning, part of every ship's everlasting programme. Inside and outside I scrubbed the engine-room, and like the First Lord of the Admiralty in the play: "I scrubbed that engine-room so thoughtfully that soon I was"—well, not the ruler of any navee, but at least granted the boon of joining the deck squad and ordered to take my first trick at the helm, from eight o'clock at night. After a bit of instruction they handed the wheel over to me, and I had the ship between my own two hands. That was something worth while. I counted in the scheme of things. The wind had dropped somewhat and the ship's motion was easier. The topsail was furled, and I found that once I'd got the hang of things steering was enjoyable. A ship is as responsive to her helm as a horse is to its bit. You can do practically anything you like with her. And the clean, strong air up there cleansed me more than I can tell; the shuddering misery of seasickness lessened. I had the ship to watch and to learn to understand; she was given

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to little restive tricks that had to be guarded against; and when your mind is so closely occupied, your own woes diminish amazingly.

It was a quiet, placid night, very enjoyable, with the ship noises joining together into a chorus that was rather thrilling. Ropes flapped in the wind, for all the world like distant drums calling to action. The gently parted water gurgled past our sides and seemed to chuckle a welcome to the *Quest*. Mysterious lights loomed up through the growing haze—red, white and green. The magic of the sea was closing its grip on me, and I took that strumming as applying to myself. It was my battle call.

During the rest of the night—I got to my bunk at midnight—we ran down into fine weather. Coming on deck at eight in the morning, I saw a bluer sea than I'd ever seen. It was wonderful, beautiful, and the air was caressingly warm. The wide horizon was flawless, there was never a cloud in the serene blue sky. Everyone's spirits vastly improved; there was laughter and the hearty note of a high endeavour in the voices of nearly all hands. Because the wind had dropped, all sail had been taken in, and the ship was proceeding under steam alone, and, I fear, not making much of a job of it. At her best the *Quest* was no ocean greyhound. The top speed we were able to make under engines alone was about five and a half knots an hour—a little quicker than we could have walked! But, judging by the stern pounding of the engines below, we might have been breaking records.

I was standing the morning watch, 8 to 12, the watch when most of the ship-work is done; and always there is a lot, even in a little ship. Before I trod a deck-plank I had a notion that being at sea consisted for the most part in sprucely pacing the decks and point-

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ing a telescope at the horizon, hoisting my slacks and singing thrilling sea chanties. The reality was very different. Apart altogether from taking a regular trick at the wheel—the easiest part of seafaring in many ways—there are look outs to be kept, decks to be washed—if the ship is going down you give a final scrub to her planks, remember!—paintwork to be wiped over, sails to be loosed and set and furled and overhauled; old ropes to be spliced, whipped and served; new ropes to be coiled and recoiled and trailed out astern in order to remove the annoying kinks that take up so much space on a crowded deck; the cook demands assistance, there are always errands to go, and so the time slips by so rapidly that almost as soon as a watch begins it is ended. Then you go below, where you are at liberty to do what you like—in reason. Your time is more or less your own, and it is wonderful how many odd jobs you can find to occupy that time. Of course, you sleep a lot; that's the sailor's favourite recreation, according to my way of thinking. Sleep aboard ship is a very sacred thing; you never disturb a slumberer unnecessarily.

But apart from sleep you've got innumerable "chores" to perform in your own interest. There are your clothes to be washed and mended, since laundresses don't form part of an Antarctic ship's crew; also, if you are interested in cleanliness, there is yourself to be kept immaculate, though in none too much fresh water. At first I didn't believe it when I was told by one of the crew that he and seven others had enjoyed a perfectly sumptuous bath apiece in one half-pannikinful of warm water; but afterwards I quite understood. They used a shaving-brush!

Keeping a diary, too, always occupies a certain amount of time, and from the outset of the voyage I kept as faithful a record of the little happenings of

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every day as I could. Of course, I missed many of the most important happenings that were the property of the seniors of the expedition; but I have hopes that this casual record of the life we lived may prove of interest to those who have never braved the frozen South in a 125-ton cockboat.

Already, although only a couple of days out, we seem very remote from ordinary life. We're a little self-contained community all on our own, bound together by the bonds of a common determination, aware of the dangers and discomforts that await us, but cheerfully resolved—at least, I was—to make the best of anything that came our way.

I went on watch again at four o'clock—the first “dog.” Good times and decent health returned: life lost a lot of that brownish-yellow tinge that had hung at its edges lately. At four a.m. I was roused out for the “graveyard watch,” turning out into darkness, cold and reluctant to leave “Blanket Alley.” At daylight I was put on the general housemaid's work of the ship: scrubbing decks, polishing brasses, washing the paint.

A strong breeze was blowing during this watch, and the ship was more than a little lively. She shipped a little water, too, wetting us to the skin; but we were all cheerful and there were no complaints. We were, as the Boss said, shaking down, dovetailing ourselves into our allotted places and rubbing off the awkward corners, for aboard a little ship there's no place for corners.

To-day Captain Worsley, the sailing master, gave me the job of lamp-trimmer, and in pursuit of my duties I went forward to find some oil, since even Antarctic lamps won't burn without fuel. I had just unlashed a drum and was in the act of opening it, when Sir Ernest Shackleton, who was near by, gave me a needed lesson in common-sense sailorizing.

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"Don't try to do too many things on your own until you've got the hang of them," he said. "If any accident happened and that drum fetched away, the boatswain would be blamed, because safe stowage is his job. When you mix in with another man's job, always remember that he might have to take blame that's rightly due to you." Consequently I lashed the drum up again; and the Boss, watching closely with those eyes that always seemed to see everything down to the last little detail, said: "I see you've made it good and fast; but you've put on a slippery hitch. Here's the right way, and it's the right way that counts at sea." Then he explained carefully how the thing should be done, and afterwards gave me a lesson in whipping frayed rope-ends. With all the weight of responsibility he carried on his shoulders, and all his worries—for he had many—he still found time to interest himself in an obscure Scout. But he was like that; I think that was one of the qualities that made him great. The ship was already proving something of a disappointment to him. Her speed was far short of what was expected, and there seemed a probability of our reaching the ice too late; but he still had time and consideration enough to teach me my job personally.

Of course, with the freshening wind we had set sail again to help along our insufficient engines. Under her press of canvas the ship made fairly good weather, but the amount of water she brought aboard was considerable, and gave the Boss some concern. We were so stacked and cluttered with important gear that any sea might seriously damage our equipment. Sir Ernest wondered what was likely to happen when we got into the Roaring Forties; but even so, when next day we had to take in sail he was still able to interest himself in my progress and safety.

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In taking in sail it was my lot to help make fast the staysail, and to do it effectively I got into a somewhat precarious position in the bows. When I went aft Shackleton called me to him and said: "I saw you right forrard just now, youngster. I like to see you do it—it shows zeal; but just remember that a sailor isn't made in a dog-watch. I don't expect you to do that sort of thing until you've got your proper sea-legs." He was always like that; always considerate of his people, anxious for their safety and comfort and general well-being. Then he gave me to understand, without a lot of flapdoodle, that I wasn't shaping so badly; and I left him in a glow of satisfaction, because it is something to please such a leader of men.

We got shortened down in time, but none too soon, because before very long a real gale, that had got up with astonishing rapidity, was blowing. In five minutes or thereabouts the ship was rolling alarmingly, taking such heartful sweeps that I, who knew little of the capabilities of a ship, wondered how soon she would capsize. She put her whole soul into that rolling, swinging her yardarms to the water on either side. White water piled over our rails, and the strumming and harping of the wind in the stripped spars was awe-inspiring. Everywhere the sea was whipped to white-capped anger; the sky was lowering, covered with black-edged clouds; and the rattle of the hurled spindrift was deafening. You'd never think there could be so much noise as during a gale at sea. At ten o'clock I went, not without trepidation, I admit, to take my trick at the wheel; but the Boss interfered here. I can't say I was sorry. The ship that in fine weather seemed friendly and docile under my hands, promised in this flurry to be more than a bit of a handful. Shackleton told me that I hadn't enough experience as yet to handle the *Quest* in a seaway, so I got busy with other work.



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I dare say that from the deck of a forty-thousand-ton Atlantic liner this gale might have seemed a trifle, nothing more than a capful of wind and a very slightly disturbed sea; but seen from the *Quest* it was an eye-opener. Big seas came cascading over the bows in an unceasing procession, and at every roll the ship seemed eager to bale half the Atlantic aboard over her rails. I found this everlasting erratic movement very tiring; the wind sort of confused one, and the annoyance at the unending slashing of the sprays was great. To steady her we tried to set the mizen; but almost as it was sheeted home there came a ripsnorting squall that split it badly, so all our work went for nothing. The sail was taken in, and the steadiness that might have resulted from the weight of wind it could have carried was denied us.

Officially, this breeze was termed a moderate S.W. gale; at the time I wondered what a real storm was going to be like. To me the waves seemed to pile up like mountains, towering high and very high above us, swinging down towards the shivering hull as if determined to overwhelm it, only to swing us up and up to a watery, noisy crest, on which we perched like the Ark on Mount Ararat, to stare down into vast caverns, veined with milky white and noisy to a degree, until down we swooped, with a curious, unsettling corkscrew motion that made one's middle-part seem like water, to wallow and riot in a very pit of anger.

Well, later on I was to learn to my satisfaction what a real gale was. This was only a fleabite; but it served to give us all some idea of the seaworthy qualities of the gallant little *Quest*.

So lively was the motion that it was an impossibility to pretend to serve a meal below; the dishes and plates refused to remain on the tables, in spite of the fiddles and the devices seamen use at sea. Consequently we

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were supplied with meat sandwiches on deck, which we ate as best we could, and counted ourselves lucky if we found our mouths. In my pride of recovery—for seasickness was now little but an unpleasant memory—I felt sorry for Mooney. He was having the thinnest of times, but game to a degree with it all. He tried his best to overcome the complaint, but it was too much for him; during this snatch of bad weather he was incapable of stirring hand or foot. He made no outcry about it, but his face told more than many words could have done. And there was no comfort to be found for him anywhere; he simply had to stick it out and make the best of it.

We were making no headway worth speaking of all this time; the wind was foul, and the lop of the seas undid any useful work the engines might have done. On account of the slamming and pitching, something went wrong with those engines; and though, during the afternoon, the wind lessened and the sea began to smooth itself out rather agreeably, there was a curious knocking note down in the engine-room that convinced us all that things were not as they ought to be.

Later this disorder down below became so pronounced that Sir Ernest Shackleton decided to put into Lisbon for overhaul, even at the cost of wasted time.

During the night the gale decreased into nothing, and in the morning the weather was quite decent. Very decent, I called it; but that was possibly by way of contrast—you have to weather a blow before you can appreciate good times. Sunday though it was, the ordinary work of the ship had to be performed, and the grimy disorder resulting from the gale removed.

We managed to get into wireless touch with Lisbon, and asked that a tug might be dispatched to help us in our limping progress. We needed it, for though the

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weather was growing gloriously fine and the sea was smooth, we were hardly making headway. A tug was promised, and we began to look forward to the joys of the land.

When I went on deck at midnight to stand the middle watch, the lights of the Portuguese coast were already invitingly in sight. Sir Ernest Shackleton was in charge, peering anxiously ahead. The Portuguese coast is not a particularly friendly one, especially at night, for the Burlings are an awkward reef, on which many a good ship has come to disaster. At the wheel I was constantly busy, obeying orders to alter course as this light and that hove in sight. To me there was a fascination in this creeping through the night that is hard to describe. But by two o'clock the Boss decided that I had had enough of it, and sent me below to prepare some food, whilst Mr. Lysaght took my place at the helm. At four o'clock I answered the frantic call of my bunk and lost all interest in everything for four gorgeous hours.

Turning out again, with a thrill of expectancy, I found the ship some two miles off the coast. Because of the clearness of the atmosphere I got a very good view of Portugal, which from the sea is very beautiful and quaint. The land rose steeply out of the placid, colourful sea, and the green slopes were plentifully dotted with red-roofed, whitewashed houses. A bright sun bathed the picture radiantly, and the discomforts of the recent storm were immediately forgotten. Here was something new, something foreign to occupy attention; now it was a cluster of smiling houses, again it was a frowning castle perched high on a mighty peak. We crawled along at slow speed, envying—oh, how we envied!—the big, powerful liners that steamed vigorously past; all of which, recognizing in the little, dishevelled cockboat a ship that was to fare farther and see greater marvels

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than they had ever seen, signalled us greetings. An enormous P. and O. boat came charging up, ran so close alongside us that we swung and cavorted in her wash like a dinghy, and, with bright bunting slatting from her span, raced out of sight ahead. She could have carried us on her deck with the greatest ease, yet we flattered ourselves that we were proper sailormen and not merely steamboaters!

Watching the shifting panorama of the coast was not the only occupation, however. The ship, in preparation for her visit to civilization and the far from remote possibility of her again becoming a show-ship, must needs undergo her spring-cleaning; and so sougeemougee became the order of the day. Everything washable was washed, until we shone from stem to stern; and the deck-hamper was shifted so as to present some appearance of tidiness. But at noon we got a wireless from Lisbon to say that the ordered tug found it impossible to face the short, steep seas that were then running, and consequently we crawled into Cascaes roadstead, at the mouth of the Tagus, and anchored there on the advice of the pilot who boarded us. Portuguese pilots like their comforts, I think, and cordially dislike night navigation; but this one found little to his liking on board the *Quest*. If the ship was uncomfortable in open water in any sort of a sea, she was doubly so at anchor, for instead of being permitted her free, even rolling, every time she started one the anchor-cable fetched her up with a short, agonizing jerk that seemed to lift a man's spine up through his skull and threatened to throw him clean out of his bunk. So little did our gallant Portuguese pilot like this motion that he found a means to secure a tug, and at eleven o'clock we were piloted into quieter water in the river's mouth; after which we got what was really the first decent rest since leaving the mouth of the Channel.

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That was a good sleep; the only trouble was that it was far too short. At 6.30 in the morning we got up our anchor, and, escorted by the tug, moved serenely up the Tagus. A very fine panorama of Lisbon unfolded itself as we progressed. Backing the general view was the high-thrown Pena Palace, where ex-King Manoel fled to join his mother during the revolution; almost alongside it was the old Moorish castle built in days when the Antarctic was unknown to human ken.

Lisbon being built on several hills, the streets are consequently steep for the most part. Most of the buildings are white, with red roofs, showing up finely against a background of olive-green; and the general effect is one of almost Oriental quaintness. But over the city there hangs an atmosphere of forlornness and decay, as though this place, from which set sail explorers as intrepid as those contained in the *Quest*, in search of unknown lands, had Ichabod written largely across its clustered roofs.

At nine o'clock we made fast to a buoy, about which the muddy waters of the Tagus swirled greedily, whilst a suitable berth was found for us. Lying there, bathed in sunshine, almost oppressed by the warmth, we indulged in the glory of a bathe, a privilege which, after long abstinence, must be experienced to be appreciated. All the caked salt of our voyaging was washed away, our pores were given a chance; and the ensuing sensation of vigour and well-being was almost too delightful for description. In the late afternoon we were taken in hand by fussy tugs and punted and hauled and wedged into our berth. During all the working hours of this day I was on duty with Green, the cook, an enterprising man who thoroughly revelled in his job. His ability to contrive and make shift was remarkable; and there were those aboard the *Quest* who solemnly vowed their belief that, given an ancient pair of sea-boots, Green could

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serve up a dinner that would leave the Ritz or the Carlton amongst the "also rans."

On this night we began to understand wherein we differed from the Elizabethan voyagers. Times have altered since Francis Drake set forth from England with a high heart and an abounding ignorance, intent on discovering a short cut to India. Such entertainment as his ships were provided with was meagre; musical instruments for the most part. This, our first night in Lisbon, was enlivened by a remarkable cinema exhibition in the ward-room. Not that we were given hectic Wild West pictures; we were shown our own hazards during the gale of October 1—realistic pictures enough, taken on the spot without any suggestion of faking, and developed and completed aboard. Not a few of us, seeing how the *Quest* looked to the camera, came to the conclusion that we were bigger heroes than we really were, for the seas appeared so enormous that it was a miracle to us to know how our ship remained afloat. One thing is certain: had I seen those pictures before sending in my application to join the expedition, that application would never have been written. Even the blood of an enthusiastic Scout turned cold at thought of the dangers he had passed! But it all gave us confidence in our floating home when we saw how doggedly she met the big grey seas and trudged resolutely forward on her southward way.

Amongst white seafarers the word Dago stands for mild dishonesty. With a genuine thrill, as one tasting the real salt of adventure, I heard the order given for the night-watchman to arm himself in order that the countless valuables aboard the *Quest* might be properly safeguarded; and with a big revolver bulging his pocket the selected man took up his duties, whilst we, more fortunate, went below and coiled down for the sweet delight of an all-night-in.

## CHAPTER IV

### Lisbon to Madeira

OUR stay in Lisbon was prolonged by reason of the engine-room defects. No wonder the engines had knocked; the shaft was found to be badly out of alignment. As a natural consequence the bearings heated, and this, coupled with the fact that the high-pressure connecting-rod was bent, accounted for all our woes. The work of repair was set in hand at once, and our people began to readjust the ship's stores in order to make her more weatherly, having learnt much during the passage out across the Bay.

Certain alterations in the ship's rig were also put in hand; but as all work and no play makes Jack but a dull boy, in the afternoon of this first real day in Lisbon certain of us went ashore to see the sights, including a bull-fight. We forgathered at a café, and from there were motored to the bull-ring. Looking back on the past, I have come to the conclusion that I would sooner go ten times to the Antarctic than take one motor ride in Lisbon. Their motor-drivers seem to run mad immediately the engines begin to revolve. In Lisbon, so far as I could see, there is neither rule of the road nor speed limit. The streets are blocked, for the best part, by slow-moving bullock-carts, three, four and even five abreast. Through this welter of sluggish traffic the cars charge like six-inch shells; and if the road isn't wide enough they use the pavement. Our driver performed motoring miracles, and I firmly believe that if the pavements had not helped him he would have climbed the sides of the buildings along the way. You'd think it

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was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a high-powered motor to navigate the streets of Lisbon, but our driver did it without turning a hair, and deserved a V.C. every minute of the time he was driving. Of course, accidents happen, and the tale of dead dogs must be enormous. If our driver so much as saw a dog he let out a yell and charged straight for it, and lucky was that dog if it escaped. As for the ordinary, unconsidered pedestrian, he never troubles to look round when a motor-horn blows—he just jumps for it; up a convenient lamp-post if necessary, and then shouts thankfulness to all the saints for safe delivery from the perils of the streets.

A Portuguese bull-fight is not quite so bloodthirsty as those held in the neighbouring land of Spain. In Spain the main idea is to get the bull killed, after suitable tortures have been inflicted; in Portugal the bull's horns are padded thickly at the tips, and the principal scheme seems to be to show the agility of the bull-fighters.

As soon as the bull, always a magnificent animal, is admitted into the ring he is annoyed and excited by the waving of gaudily-coloured cloaks and flags. Being only a bull and not a philosopher, he naturally gets angry and promptly puts his head down and goes for his tormentors, who, after risking as much as they dare, leap over the barricades into safety. These cloak-wavers are merely pawns in the game; for all the time they are busy the genuine hero of the hour is in the ring, either afoot or on horseback, showing himself off to an admiring audience. A successful bull-fighter on the Tagus is a very much more important personage than the captain of a Cup Final team or a hero who has knocked up a couple of centuries in a county cricket match.

Presently the bull gets angrier—very angry indeed. His bovine nature impels him to cast about for some-



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thing on which to wreak his spite. I don't blame the bull. Even a Scout would be annoyed if a crowd of yelling idiots waved coloured blankets in his face for half an hour at a stretch! Seeing the idol of the audience proudly prancing about, the bull quite naturally lowers his head and goes for him. Here's where the sport begins. The bull-fighter, with a twirl of his moustache and a sort of hand-kiss to the ladies, promptly retreats and turns, and as the bull slithers past he plants a dart in his hide. It is a sign of skill and daring to get that dart as near the animal's head as possible. As soon as it is embedded in the skin the bull-fighter, in case anyone didn't see him, unfurls a paper flag and waves it exultantly in the air. Then the people cheer and the ladies kiss their hands, and the temporary hero bows and smiles and pretends that he is the identical man who won the Great War. Then he goes to get another dart; a shorter one this time. The shorter the dart you plant in the unfortunate bull's neck the greater the glory that comes your way, it seems. True enough, it is a sign of agility and courage, even though the bull's horns are padded; and to hear the spectators cheer you'd think it was what the Americans call "the cat's pyjamas." To my way of thinking, though, football is streets ahead of bull-fighting for downright thrills.

If the toreador happens to be dismounted, he is given even shorter darts than if he were mounted. The footman's weapons carry no paper flags, and he usually sticks them in two at a time, because he's only got two hands, I suppose. It must require a bit of nerve to do it, even though it doesn't quite come up to a Britisher's idea of sport. The bull charges like an avalanche, and I fancy, from the ring, must look about as big as a landslide. He looked gigantic from where we sat, with the wine sellers offering us heady Portuguese drinks every time we breathed; and to the toreador that bull must

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have seemed as enormous as the P. and O. boat did to the little *Quest* outside the Tagus. I held my breath more than once during those charges, I assure you, for I was certain the bull-fighter was going to be smashed to smithereens; but just at the critical moment the man stepped aside, took a short run, plunged in his two darts fairly into the back of the animal's neck, and got clear before he bellowed and turned. Yes, it was very dexterous indeed; but it didn't please the bull. He swung about, scuffling the sand and roaring, and the toreador streaked for the barricade like greased lightning.

Another took his place and did the same thing. Instead of trying to knock up a century in Portugal you try to plant a dart shorter than any other dart in the back of a mad bull's neck! And you go on doing it until the bull begins to look like an animated pin-cushion. If Stephenson's first locomotive was "bad for the coo," bull-fighting must be very bad for the bull!

Folks tire of this exhibition, so presently a whole crowd of funny-looking fellows in red and yellow are let into the ring. One of these steps forward as if he intended to be properly introduced to the bull; whereupon the bull promptly goes for him, because he thinks he's responsible for the pain he is suffering. But the man of the moment leaps fairly between the lowered horns, gets one of them under each armpit, and then starts a wrestling match with his four-footed opponent. His object is to throw the bull, and to do so requires more skill than most of them possess. There's the indignant bovine doing its best to throw the man off and stamp him or gore him to death; there's the red-faced man working as hard as you like to pitch the bull over on his side. It seemed rather a waste of energy to me, but it is the national sport down

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there, and we Britons must live and let live. Anyhow, this wrestling was uncommonly exciting. It would have been even more so if the bull's horns hadn't been padded.

Not that the sport is as bloodthirsty as might appear from the foregoing description. The darts which are employed have only very tiny barbs, not much bigger than fish-hooks, intended merely to pierce the skin and not draw blood. And the bull is not killed, as I've said; it is simply baited. All the same, my sympathies were with the bulls all along. Get about fifty fish-hooks stuck through your skin and you'll understand what I mean.

Those of our party who had seen genuine Spanish bull-fights, where the bull's horns are not padded, said this show was only a mild imitation of the real thing. In Spain the horses—shocking screws, taken out of the trams after they're used up—are gored savagely, and when they scream with pain they are spurred and lifted clean on to the murderous horns for another dose of the same medicine. Sometimes even the toreadors and matadors and picadors get gored in their turn. I won't say "Serve them right," but it's my own affair what I think.

We *Quests* kept our end up so far as cheering was concerned. Whenever anything really exciting occurred we got up and yelled our famous war-cry of "Yoicks! Tally-ho!" which naturally aroused interest and amusement amongst the general run of the spectators, who got to their feet and cheered back at us very heartily, and no doubt described us to their friends at a later hour as "Those mad English!" This bull-fight was particularly honoured by the presence of the President of Portugal. I'll say it was an unusual day, very different from an average day in England!

Naturally enough, during our stay in Portugal we

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were swarmed with visitors. The British and American Ministers were shown over the *Quest* by our leader. Like the sight-seers in London and Plymouth, these visitors seemed to imagine we had joined a sort of suicide club; they were astonished at the tiny proportions of the ship and expressed grave doubts as to her future safety.

The day after the bull-fight was nothing out of the common. I was detailed for galley duty with the cook, who was now revelling in still waters, a stove that would burn, and grub that a man could take a pride in cooking. In the evening I went ashore with some Portuguese Scouts, who insisted on giving Mooney and myself a truly top-hole welcome. That's what Scouting does—it makes you firm friends wherever you go. But being a Scout, and especially a kilted Scout, makes you a bit too conspicuous, so I shed my uniform whenever possible and tried to pass along with the crowd. All the same, the Lisbon Scouts were good pals and showed us all the sights of the place. In return we showed them the sights of the *Quest* and got the debt squared in some measure. They were keenly interested, and there were so many of them that we could have filled in all our time in explaining things to them in such language as Scouts can understand.

The ship during these days was a hive of activity, for the repairing gangs were extremely hard at work straightening the shaft and refitting generally.

There was so much to be done by all hands that time went by very quickly during this halt on our voyage, but beyond bull-fighting and sight-seeing there was nothing extraordinary to recount. I missed the trip to Cintra, being busily engaged in work, but those who went told me the view from the Pena Palace was rather gorgeous. Everything is left exactly as it was when ex-King Manoel had to seek fresh pastures; even

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the papers of that day are still lying on the tables; and the view from the palace top is superb. You can see all Portugal lying as a map at your feet, they said. But the horses that tug you up the final steep of the mountain make you gnash your teeth with sympathetic rage, they are so overdriven and half-starved and brutally ill-treated. It's queer how few people beyond Britishers know how to treat a horse!

On Monday, the 10th of October, we left our berth, repairs having been completed, and made fast to a buoy in the stream. Here we restocked our tanks with fresh water, and made such final preparations as were necessary for a continuation of the voyage; and after all hands were well worked up we had another cinema show in the evening, and then turned in for the last long night's sleep for a little while. Just after lunch on the 11th we left Lisbon.

I'd prided myself on overcoming the woes of seasickness before we reached the Tagus, but, alas! I boasted too soon. Once outside the river we hit up against a nasty kind of a sea, worse than anything we'd hitherto experienced, I think; so the old familiar qualms possessed me more vindictively than ever. But I had the poor satisfaction of knowing that others were in as bad case as myself, for very few of the crew escaped on this occasion. They blamed the smallness of the ship and her pronounced lack of comfortable accommodation. Maybe it was so. I wasn't in a mood to argue, anyhow. So ill were Mooney and Mason that Sir Ernest Shackleton reluctantly decided that, failing an improvement, they would have to leave the ship at Madeira. So far as I was concerned, I think the Boss was quietly giving me a thorough "trying-out" to see if I could endure the still greater rigours that were promised us farther south; for I was set to work very hard—with the cook, stowing stores, in the stoke-

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hold, everywhere. It wasn't pleasant, but I wasn't going to let the Scouts down if I could help it, so I gritted my teeth and went at it for all I was worth. Praise was not too lavishly bestowed by Sir Ernest Shackleton, because his own standard of efficiency was so high that a man had to be pretty good even to be tolerated; but as he seemed pleased with the way I was carrying on I was satisfied.

There's one thing about the sea, I find—it either makes you or breaks you. You get salted through and through, and in some cases it toughens you, whilst in others it rots all your pluck away and makes you feel you'd like to live in the very middle of the Sahara desert and never see salt water again in your life.

But during the passage from Lisbon to Madeira I didn't feel like keeping a very exhaustive diary. Anyhow, there was nothing exciting to recount, for the weather wasn't alarmingly bad; it was only the vicious run of the seas that made the little vessel so lively.

On the 15th, however, we had a reward in a brilliantly fine day, with smooth water and not much wind, and this brightened the spirits of all aboard, though Mooney and Mason still continued under the weather and longed for the peace of dry land.

Notwithstanding the exhaustive overhaul we'd been given at Lisbon, the engines developed trouble once more; the knocking began again, and it seemed as though the days spent in Portugal were completely wasted. Madeira promised to be another welter of refitting.

During this stage of the voyage Major Carr and Captain Hussey started in with meteorological experiments, sending up kites and balloons for observations of the upper air for the first time.

When I came on deck on the morning of Sunday, October 16, I got my first sight of Madeira, and that

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glimpse of beauty seemed to atone for all previous discomforts. Madeira is a beautiful island, with its rich vineyards, its noble gorge of the Wolf that literally splits the island in two halves; its typical semi-tropical houses, with red roofs and blue or white walls and vividly painted shutters to keep out the fierce noontide heat. The clarity of the atmosphere is so remarkable here—indeed, I believe it is the clearest in the world—that you feel you could toss a biscuit ashore even when you are miles away. We came to anchor in Funchal Harbour, about a hundred yards from the shore, and breathed deep sighs of relief as the fretful motion of the *Quest* ceased and she lay once more upon an even keel. We promptly went overboard for a bathe in that amazingly clear water.

The day after our arrival Mooney and Mr. Mason left the *Quest* for home. I know it was with the greatest reluctance that Sir Ernest parted from them; but both had been very ill during the entire trip, and Mr. Mason had, indeed, been seriously ill, developing a high temperature and alarming symptoms. Both were loth to go; their natural grit prompted them to remain and stick it out to the bitter end. They made no unseemly fuss about their tribulations; but things promised to be worse rather than better as the voyage progressed, and it was in their own interests that they were relieved from further suffering. I know how elated I felt that I'd been better favoured by fortune, so I think I know how depressed they must have been. Poor Mooney was a full-sized brick throughout; he showed all the best characteristics of the best sort of Scout, and there was not the slightest fault attaching to him in his inability to endure the rigours. But knowing that the whole weight of Scout responsibility rested on my shoulders was rather a startling realization. Still, I was managing to get hardened by this time, and I hoped for the best.

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This afternoon the cook and myself went ashore, on shopping bent. Our principal desire was to find fruit, which shouldn't have been a difficult matter in an island famous for its fruits; but somehow we contrived to lose our bearings and wandered into the filthiest parts of the town—and Funchal can be very filthy in places. We managed to count at least one hundred and thirty-five different smells—Green said there were two hundred and fifty, but perhaps he exaggerated—but all were vile. Every alley corner we passed, every open window, discharged its fresh offensive; and we seemed to walk for miles and uncounted miles before eventually we touched down in the market. There we ordered what we needed, and afterwards went on to see the sights.

Madeira is interesting. Its foreign note is very marked, for here the foliage is definitely approaching the tropical; hibiscus flowers are everywhere in the greatest profusion, and the vivid crimson poinsettias strike a warm and enlivening note. Huge clusters of wonderful blooms met our gaze at every turn, and drew our attention from the little cobblestones of the streets, which are uncommonly hard to walk upon.

There were not very many wheeled conveyances visible, for the island doesn't lend itself to them overmuch; the few motors we saw were ancient and honourable members of the fraternity. The principal means of conveyance are the bullock-cars—wooden sledges, drawn by bulls, fine, big, sleek animals, though very leisurely in all their movements. One sees these cars going everywhere about the streets on well-greased runners. Some of the cars are very tastefully got up and drawn by bullocks as white as snow; and the motion when one gets inside is far from unpleasant. Of course, the streets are so rutted and worn in Funchal that ordinary wheels would soon come to grief; but the long sledge-runners sort of bridge the worst of the holes, as a



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big liner crosses from wave-crest to wave-crest without diving too deeply into the troughs, and consequently you don't realize how ill-kept the roads really are.

As practically all Funchal is built on the side of a hill, you may be sure the streets are steep. We didn't try to climb them unnecessarily, but contented ourselves with standing at the bottom and looking up, a much more restful occupation than working to the top and looking down. Then we had tea, where they apologized for a little meal with a big, an astoundingly big, bill. Still, although the little cakes they gave us were evidently relics of the ancient Portuguese travellers, the tea was wet and damped the dry, sawdust-like confectionery excellently.

A lot of sugar-cane grows in Madeira, and the sight of the groves is very pleasant. And all amongst the soft green of the young canes you see those marvellous splashes of colour from the poinsettias and the hibiscus, so that your brain, refusing to take in the full effect, perceives only a blur. They told us that the roads and paths between the groves were constructed by Portuguese convicts, and we believed them. Honest men could never have made such fiendish roads!

In the evening we were invited as guests to the mess of the Western Telegraph Company, who have a cable station here and who publish the only newspaper in English on the island. Our hosts were very cordial and did us nobly; they apologized for the general atmosphere of poverty that characterizes the island by saying that the Lisbon Government taxes everyone so heavily for Portugal's good, that when the taxes are paid there's nothing left for home improvements.

## CHAPTER V

### Experiences Afloat

NEXT day we hove up anchor and started off for Cape Verde. You'd hardly think a small ship so full of men could feel lonely, but the *Quest* seemed to me to miss our late shipmates. We still carried our passenger, however—Mr. Lysaght, who had intended to leave us at Madeira, but who was so well liked aboard that he was persuaded to stay on a little longer. Immediately on leaving Madeira we picked up the fine north-east trades, and with every stitch of canvas we could carry, bowled along nobly toward the South.

No doubt many interesting things happened aboard that never came under my immediate notice, though you might think it was impossible for anything to transpire within such narrow confines as those of the *Quest* without all hands immediately securing the fullest information; but other better qualified pens than mine have dealt with them. I am trying to give my own impression of this astonishing voyage as it appealed to me: a raw landlubber and a somewhat young one. And I suppose that to a mole, its own burrow is of much more importance than even a European war.

What chiefly concerned me about this time was the cook's mishap. Prior to leaving Funchal, Green had run a fishbone into his hand, causing him considerable pain, and rendering him useless during the rest of the day; but with true pertinacity he stuck it out until the morrow found his hand in a much worse condition; whereupon Mr. Douglas, our geologist, volunteered to

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replace him in the galley. For, although all hands had specific duties allotted to them as regards the expedition proper—that is: one was meteorologist, another geologist, another flying-man, and so on, when not actually engaged in scientific duties, all took part and lot with the general crew. There was a good deal of the Drake spirit about our leader: "I should not care to see the gentleman who would refuse to hale and draw with the mariners" was one of his mottoes, and so—the geologist became acting "Doctor," and celebrated his appointment by heaving the disabled cook from his sanctum sanctorum, as, being a new broom, he wanted to make a clean sweep. Let's say Green's hand recovered rapidly; we won't blame the breakfast; but at all events, Green returned to duty after that meal was served, and so a possible mutiny was averted!

Beyond washing my clothes, this was about the only incident of the day. Next day brought us sight of a noble Royal Mail boat snorting magnificently along; and those who watched her regaled themselves with moving accounts of the comforts and luxuries to be had aboard. As Mr. Mason, our original cinema photographer, had returned to England, Mr. Wilkins, the naturalist, deputed for him, and managed to secure some very good shots at the moving monster. Daily duties, necessary and time-absorbing, filled in the hours not unpleasantly, and the usual even glide of day and night set in after its break in port. There is no way of eating time so thoroughly as by keeping regular watch-and-watch at sea: days slip into weeks, weeks into months, so very smoothly as to be well-nigh imperceptible.

The summery weather conditions now necessitated something of a change in our regular mode of life. The little wardroom, snug and warm farther north, was growing unpleasantly stuffy; and the scorch of the sun on the

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decks did nothing to mend matters. Consequently, awnings were rigged on the poop, and meals were served beneath it in alfresco fashion; a welcome change from the tinned atmosphere of down below. So genial were the weather conditions that I felt it incumbent upon me to celebrate the occasion, which I did to the extent of a much-needed shave: the first for ten clear days; though the private opinion of some aboard, I believe, was that I was growing unnecessarily dandified! Others thanked me politely and vowed that I had raised the water-line of the ship by a full two inches, thus guaranteeing her seaworthiness if further bad weather came our way.

We began, now, to use the deck much more than down below; it was not only our messroom and our music-room, but also our bedroom. Even the gramophone seemed to appreciate the change to open air, for it did its noblest this evening under the awning, when Shackleton's favourite airs were played all through and a spirit of mirth and cheer animated all hands. Excellent amity prevailed: we were shaking down into our places, fitting ourselves into corners, and determined to make the best of these present good times in preparation for the prophesied bad times ahead.

Turning-in on deck was an enjoyable experience: free air blowing about your face makes for enjoyable rest; and it is possible, lying under open sky, to study and marvel over the radiant glory of the stars. There are no stars like those of the tropical skies; they are bigger and brighter than seen in English skies, and seem not so much to be set flat on a board as arranged in proper perspective. Why anyone should frowst below decks when there is room above, I fail to understand. Query, the wolf-hound, shared my opinion, for he slept at my head all night and aroused me at daybreak by licking my face. He showed promise of growing into a fine

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dog, and was already a good friend to all aboard. You've simply *got* to make a pet of something at sea; and you are lucky if you are given so excellent an object for your affections as was Query.

Fine weather at sea means—so I was told by those more experienced than myself—an orgy of painting. The craze bit the ship's company now, and some wonderful decorative effects resulted. And the weather was really fine—sunny sky, sea like glass, and never an awkward movement to the ship, save for the long, even swell that was more like a steady breathing of the ocean than an actual heave.

But lest too much fresh, sweet air should harm us and increase our appetites beyond all reason, it was decided that now was the day and hour to trim bunkers; so all hands turned to to chew coal-dust. The engines were stopped and all sail was set. Once more our mechanical heart was showing symptoms of valvular disease; and the engineer was loudly of opinion that only extensive repairs and alterations could save the situation. During the day the breeze freshened somewhat, so that the good, clean rustling of the distended canvas sang a note of striving; but fair though the breeze was, we made indifferent headway; and in the evening the engines were started up once more. It appeared as if the ship was annoyed at this interference with her placid progress; for the first turn of the screw caused the hull to give such a fiendish lurch that the entire galley did its best to turn a somersault and capsize, spilling everything worth while over the deck. A big can of boiling cocoa plentifully bathed the cook's legs; a tin of melted fat smothered the floor; and for an hour we were as fully employed as we had any desire to be. Cooling fat leaves much to be desired in the handling; and I was glad that I was over my seasickness! All that troubled me now was toothache, and that

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was getting better. But we mopped up the *débris* and scoured everything white again, and turned in with the sweet consciousness of work well done. Thinking it necessary, no doubt, to take his share in the common toil, Query contrived to discover a flying-fish which had blundered aboard in the blind fashion these fish have of doing things. It was a very toothsome morsel—but not for Query!

My own individual duties during these days lacked nothing on the score of variety. Turning-to at six o'clock, I proceeded to assist in scrubbing decks—as they call it in the Navy; washing down, as it is designated in the merchant service. A hose and a broom are in demand for this sea-ritual. Having satisfactorily completed this sanitary duty, I went aft and got all things in order for breakfast, and served at table whilst my seniors ate. Simple enough in the telling, but when the sea got up a bit, as it did about now, and the ship grew lively, not so simple in the actuality. Since no right-thinking man cares to have his breakfast spilt down the back of his neck, it behoved me to be careful, as I had no wish to figure as principal character at a coroner's inquest. Another of my daily duties was to scrub out Sir Ernest's cabin. Don't, please, carry away from these pages an impression of a sumptuous state-room. This sea-bedroom was little better than a glorified packing-case: it measured seven feet by six, and when you were in it you felt half-afraid to draw a full breath in case you carried something away or burst the bulkheads apart. The door of this cabin opened on the afterside; and on the port side was the bunk, stretching the entire length of the room, with drawers beneath and a single porthole above. A small washstand stood against the forrard bulkhead; shelves well-filled with books on the starboard side, and a small, collapsible chair completed the more elaborate furnishings. In

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addition, fixed to the forrard bulkhead, was a small, white-enamelled cabinet fitted with an oval mirror in the door, and an emergency oil-lamp for use when the electric supply gave out. That's as good a description as I can give of this tabloid apartment, where you could do everything humanly possible without leaving one spot!

After daily breakfast I did whatever I was told to do—helped the cook to clean the galley and prepare the meals, took a trick at the helm, trimmed coal, gave a hand with the sails and rigging, and made myself generally useful. As one of my shipmates said: "It was a pity we had no clay aboard because I might have spent my leisure in making bricks!"

Wednesday, October 26, was a red-letter day: one to be recorded with all due solemnity. I had my wages raised! When cleaning out his cabin on this particular morning the Boss asked me what I had been doing in Aberdeen in addition to scouting. I told him that I had been at the University. Whereupon he laid the accolade upon my shoulders by saying, in that deep, pleasant voice of his which seemed designed to beat up against the fiercest gale that ever blew: "Well, you're pleasing me very much so far, and I want to increase your pay to £12 a month. That will help pay your fees when you get back to the Granite City."

I was enormously pleased. It wasn't so much the increase of pay as the kindly words that accompanied the promise. I was giving satisfaction to such a judge of humanity as Sir Ernest Shackleton! That was what warmed my blood. I'd passed severe tests and was qualified to count myself properly one of the adventurous brotherhood! It seemed to me as if this honour had been bestowed on all Scoutdom, and I was glad.

Cape Verde Islands greeted my sight this morning, looming dimly into view. By noon we were closing the

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coast, rugged and inhospitable. Absolutely nothing but bare rock was visible; sun-scorched and lacking entirely in verdure; bare rock rising majestically some fifteen hundred feet into the clear air, never a tree to break its monotony, apparently no soil in which a single blade of grass might grow. St. Vincent has few charms at the best; it is used for little else beyond a coaling station and a connecting link in the world's submarine cable system. Rain seldom falls in St. Vincent, and it is too remote from the rest of the world to be fertilized by passing birds. Its harbour, though, is a fine, natural roadstead, being composed of an assortment of smaller islands, and the native divers beat anything I have ever come across, though they are reputed to be as light of finger as they are deft of movement in the water, and occasionally they are apt to become truculent and peevish if interrupted in their favourite hobby of abstracting such movables as they can lay hands on. Not that it was necessary for an article to be movable. I was solemnly assured by one who should have known that these same modern buccaneers had on one occasion endeavoured to steal the funnel out of the ship that harboured him!

Bathing off the ship was vetoed on account of rumoured sharks, which did not appear to trouble the natives overly; but it was permissible closer inshore, and we only too gladly took full advantage of this opportunity. It was a delightful experience, for the water was so balmy as to be like a continued caress.

At night a farewell dinner was given to Mr. Lysaght, who was to leave us here and return to England, home and beauty. Throughout the journey he had quitted himself in most manly fashion, refusing to succumb when hardier men than himself went down, bearing part and lot in all that happened with the greatest good cheer. His principal wish seemed to be to continue aboard the



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*Quest*, indifferent to the call of home and comfort; but this was not to be. The ship did herself well that night: giving of her very best in food and drink, and the occasion was one to remember.

Next morning I dressed myself decently and went ashore in company with the geologist and the naturalist, Mr. Wilkins. At sea, I may mention, we dressed as convenient and studied our personal appearance very little, so that we often looked like a gang of scarecrows. The nigger population of St. Vincent turned out to greet us—not out of admiration for our noble selves, but with an honest—or dishonest—desire for gain. They literally mobbed us as we set foot ashore: snatching at our bags, thrusting diminutive donkeys under our noses, clamouring to be permitted to show us the sights, and generally buzzing about like gigantic flies. What they lacked in reserve they made up in enthusiasm; but we considered ourselves quite able to look after ourselves. We collected various tiny donkeys, and I found myself very greatly at sea when I boarded my noble mount. Steering the *Quest* was child's play as compared with navigating that ass at first, but one got the hang of it after a while and contrived to make some progress ahead instead of sideways.

Nothing I saw ashore here altered my first impression of the Cape Verdes. They are, without exception, the barest, poorest lumps of land I've ever seen. St. Vincent, like the other islands, is purely volcanic in character, and what is not bare, vitreous rock is simply dry, reddish volcanic earth that contains no fertilizing qualities, so far as I am aware. There had been no rain for two years prior to our arrival; there was naturally no herbage growing, all was sheer sun-scorched rock and blazing heat, tempered only a little by the sea breezes. As nothing will grow ashore beyond a few miserable stalks of maize on the higher slopes, the in-

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habitants, set down there for their sins presumably, would starve but for another island in the group. From this island they secure water, which is ferried across in boats, and also all their cereals and fruits, though these are nothing to wax eloquent over. Even this water is not very palatable; it is obtained by boring down to a great depth, and as there had been no rain to liven the springs, the general result was stale and unlikeable. Until it is boiled and sterilized it is practically undrinkable. So that, taking one thing with another, it is not surprising that occasionally quite large numbers of the native population die off from sheer starvation. Their staple food is ground maize, and when it becomes scarce, as it so often does, they are in a bad plight.

We travelled up into the hills quite a distance, thanks to our donkeys. Joining Mr. Wilkins I went bug-hunting; we successfully pursued butterflies, caterpillars and other creepie-crawlies. Mr. Wilkins added a small lizard to his bag, and seemed delighted; whilst Mr. Douglas contented himself with his own particular hobby: studying the dykes, and hills, and volcanic formations of the island, collecting certain specimens that interested him on the way. Some of the butterflies, which we bagged in considerable numbers, were rarely beautiful, and seemed, in my opinion, to be wasting their time at St. Vincent. There's a Scots lament called "The Barren Rocks of Aden," but the man who composed it had never seen St. Vincent, or he'd have decided that Aden was nothing to make a song about.

Coming back, we seemed so much too big for our donkeys as they braved the precipitous slopes that out of sheer humanity—to say nothing of respect for our necks—we dismounted and proceeded afoot along the scorching rocks which seemed to burn through our boot-soles as if we walked across red-hot lava. The impression I

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received was of a weary plodding through a hopeless desert, and this suggestion was increased by the great swirls of vultures that were everywhere overhead. How they lived on St. Vincent I do not know; maybe, like the Maltese, they took in each other's washing, or fed on one another.

Here, again, the Western Telegraph Company gave us warm hospitality: a rousing good evening with dinner and a sing-song to follow. By way of a leg-stretcher, and in order, I suppose, to rid ourselves of the superabundant energy accumulated in the close quarters of the *Quest*, we then let ourselves go; had a go-as-you-please rugger match in the passage—much to the consternation of the nigger servants—and generally took the place apart. When a score of hefty Britishers feel within them the spirit of movement things are apt to get smashed. But a rough-house is a good thing occasionally, and I dare say we should have had one or two aboard but that we were too much afraid of bursting the ship apart.

Whilst we sported others toiled, for we found to our unbounded satisfaction on returning in the ghostly small hours, that the *Quest* had been coaled and we were saved the grimy irksomeness of that unpleasant labour. I was glad enough, I assure you, for though I don't profess to be any more afraid of work than the next fellow, there's a lot of fine, heartfelt joy in knowing that someone else has done your job! Late aboard never meant late abed under Shackleton; six o'clock found me resuming the daily task. A homeward-bound liner, by which Mr. Lysaght travelled, replenished our lockers with fresh provisions—much better than the stringy goat obtainable ashore—and also granted us the inestimable boon of a ton of ice for the freezer. Ice counted for a lot there near the Line; but the time was to come—yet why anticipate?

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During our enforced stay in St. Vincent our engines were once more tuned up, in the hope that the usual discords they played would cease. Visitors naturally came and went, for anything the least little bit out of the ordinary is an event in that sun-baked wilderness; but, with the engines reported fit and ready again, we once more put out to sea.

## CHAPTER VI

### On the Way to Rio

WE steamed out on the Rio de Janeiro route on October 29. Endless numbers of albacore welcomed us to the open water, leaping vividly in the startling blue sea, crisping it with snowy foam splashes. The Boss drew my attention to them first—he was always very decent that way in pointing out such details as he considered might interest a somewhat ignorant first-voyager. That was one of the traits in his character that drew men to him I think; his infinite interest in the little things; no detail was too small for him, no trouble too great. Albacore are fine, plump fish; some that I saw must have measured quite five feet from nose to tail—perhaps more, for they're as quick in the water as the sheep the Irishman couldn't count by reason of their liveliness; you only get a fleeting impression of them as they leap clear into the air then splash back with a noble flurry into their native element.

Everything seemed propitious as we went rolling down to Rio; everything, that is, except our engines. No, it wasn't the man-made machinery that played us up this time, but the precious St. Vincent coal—dust and such poor steam-making stuff that it was impossible to maintain a working pressure for long at a time. As a consequence, we crawled; but this lazy fanning along across a sapphire sea is an enjoyable experience enough. Down in the bunkers loud cheering announced the finding of an occasional lump of coal by way of a change from the dust, and after a while a better pressure was secured, thereby quickening our pace. Flying-fish were

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very plentiful, and the feeling now was that we were merely embarked on a yachting cruise.

Now, to detail each day as it passed would be but a reiteration, monotonous in the extreme. I find that during certain portions of this Rio run my diary reads much as Mark Twain's did when he, as a boy, endeavoured to keep one. "Got up, washed, went to bed," about describes it. And though the routine work aboard a ship at sea can be uncommonly interesting to the worker, as I always found it, it can also, in its description, be very boring to those who desire other things than a plain tale of plain, unexciting happenings. Daily I got up, did my work, went to bed. True, there were events which, unimportant in themselves, yet served to interest us who were dependent on the chance incidents of sea travel for our amusement. What pleased me personally was the continued keen interest the Boss took in me. When it would appear that my duties were somewhat monotonous and irksome he was there to console—not that I needed it, for duty aboard the *Quest* was always a pleasure—but the thought that he, with a brainful of responsibility, aware that his ship, secured after so much planning, lacked in many respects the perfection that was really necessary for a thoroughly successful expedition, with all his great plans constantly seething in his mind, could still take so lively an interest in the thoughts and feelings of the least-to-be-considered member of his crew, gratified me and bound me to him with bands of steel. His desire was that all aboard should be happy, for he knew how small a mite of the heaven of unhappiness can affect the entire personnel. The yarns he used to spin of his own youth at sea, too, were entertaining beyond the power of description; his bluff, hearty personality infused a happy content into the daily round.

Through the blazing days and the gorgeous nights

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of the Tropics we slid smoothly towards Rio : sleeping out in the open constantly, by reason of the stifling heat of down below. These nights on deck are a pleasant memory. No covering was needed save something thrown across the eyes, lest moon-blindness might result. Shackleton had some yarns to tell of careless boys in his sailing-ship days suffering from this curious complaint, as a result of sleeping in the full glare of a white, tropical moon, that rides like a silver cannon-ball in a purple velvet pall spangled bewilderingly with myriad stars. Boys, perfect of sight by day, became as blind as bats by night ; they developed twisted necks and drawn faces, all through the baleful influence of this beautiful night illuminant, which can be an enemy as well as a friend to those who go down to the sea in ships.

Sleeping in the open air, I discovered, was infinitely more refreshing than sleeping in a cabin below-deck : one wakened instantly, with every sense fully on the alert, instead of the usual slow heaving up from the chasms of sleep. But, occasionally these restful slumbers on deck were rudely interrupted. A rain-squall fetched me from my plank couch one morning at five o'clock ; brilliant lightning was searing the sky, and the wind, freshening in squalls, was whipping up a considerable sea. Thus we began genuinely to roll down to Rio, for the *Quest*—of which no ill be spoken !—could always hold her own at that rolling game, and seemed as much in earnest about this part of her work as she did about any other. The big square-sail had to be furled on account of these quickening squalls, and the staysail set instead ; but the rolling continued ; and there were those who vowed that even in dry dock our ship was capable of liveliness.

By this time we were learning the value of fresh water during a prolonged voyage. In every case where salt water could be used in the ship's cleaning, it was

## Into the Frozen South

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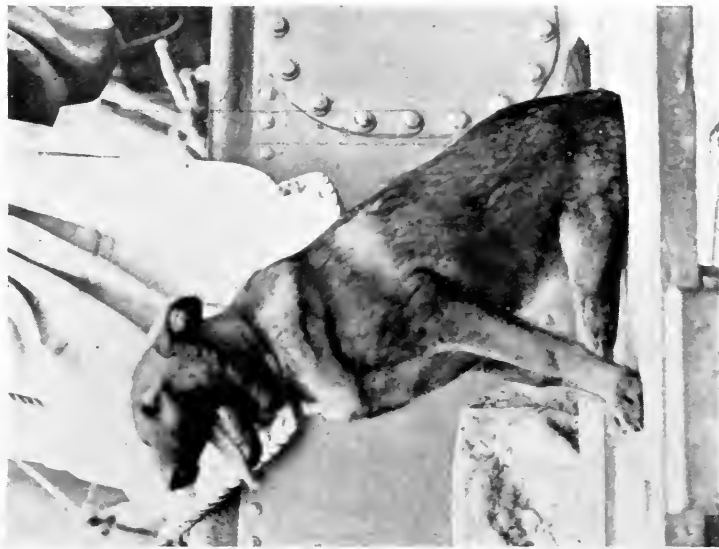
used; and even our ordinary washing was reduced to the minimum. Aboard a small sailing vessel with a limited tank-capacity, fresh water is permissible for only two purposes: drinking and cooking. All rain-water that falls must needs be carefully conserved, too: and from the oldsters I received not one but many serious lectures on the value of economy in this precious fluid.

One outstanding event was the harpooning of a giant porpoise. Mr. Eriksen was our harpooner: taking advantage of a shoal of these sea-pigs being very much in evidence about our bows one morning, he grew animated, felt within him the northern desire to kill something, and equipped himself with a harpoon and line, with which he crept out on the boom-guys forrard and lay in wait. Presently he saw his chance: a porpoise, more daring or careless than the rest, shot within his distance. It was a good throw he made: clean into the back-fin went the steel; and away like a flash of lightning shot Master Porpoise. It went aft, towing the line with it. Every available hand promptly clapped on to the whirring line: one man endeavoured to snatch a holding turn round a bollard; but Mr. Eriksen yelled: "Steek! Steek!" in a perfect frenzy of excitement—I think he was surprised at the fairness of his aim!—and those on the rope hung on for dear life; the swing of their arms and bodies giving enough play to the line to prevent the harpoon being torn from its holding. But even so, the helpers seemed to apply too much strain to the light line; for Eriksen was far from pleased, and, English failing him in his dilemma, he had recourse to his native Norwegian, which, volleyed forth as he volleyed it, is a most expressive language. But though expressive it was not illuminating: confusion grew, until some of Eriksen's meaning penetrated to our minds, and the line was slacked off sufficiently to permit the stricken fish to be brought to starboard, where we





On the Way: The *Quest* in the Trades. *Mr. J. Lister.*



*Photo: Topical.*

### THE SHIP'S PETS.

Query, the Wolfhound. Questie, the Cat, on Marr's Shoulder.

## On the Way to Rio

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were able to see how truly Eriksen had struck. Blood poured from the wound; the blowing of the porpoise was fearsome; its strength was nearly spent, and it was wallowing somewhat pitifully when we drew it close alongside; so, in order to put a period to its misery, Mr. Wild promptly shot it. Then we got it aboard and gazed satisfiedly at our kill. Seven feet seven inches long he was, and seemed to weigh a ton; but we had no means of verifying that estimate.

Query and the cat betrayed curiosity mingled with awe of our catch. Especially the cat: it completely failed to understand the queer body with its piglike snout and its scaleless skin; and when, by way of hardening it to the realities of the sea, the cat was thrown on the porpoise's back, you would have thought it had landed on india-rubber, so actively did it bounce into the air from the displeasing contact.

But after a bit of skylarking, the porpoise was taken into stock: the best parts of the flesh, cut into steaks, were handed over to the cook, together with the brains and tongue; the tail was cut off to be used as a trophy of our prowess, and the rest of the carcass was returned to the sea.

On the day we killed the porpoise we discovered a new hobby: coal-sifting. It was necessary, in order to maintain a working head of steam, to separate the dust from the lumps—much dust to very few lumps—and all the useless stuff was hove overside. A messy, gritty job! But the rain helped us somewhat: and it did rain! Solid sheets of it came cascading down, so that to keep even a semblance of dryness was out of the question; but the weather was so warm that the down-pour was more in the nature of a blessing than a curse. We were now fairly in the doldrums.

Just before lunch the sea presented us with a picture: one that is all too seldom seen in these days of

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mechanical progress and stern utility. A noble sailing-ship: a vast five-masted Frenchman, *La France*, hove in sight. She was becalmed, a painted ship lying still on a painted ocean; with her enormous spread of canvas and the beautiful tracery of her rigging reflected in every tiniest detail in the mirror of the sea. So taken with the sight she presented was Sir Ernest that he altered course in order to pass her at close quarters; and so we not only got an excellent view of this famous Horn sailing-ship, but also some really fine photographs. Moreover, as is the custom of the sea, we spoke her and gave her information such as might appeal to a wind-jammer: telling her where we had lost the North-East Trades and the strength of them as they deserted us. Quite an animated conversation was carried on between ship and ship: and the amusing part of the business was that whereas the French skipper was compelled to use a megaphone to make himself audible, the Boss, simply by funnelling his hand about his mouth, made himself perfectly well understood across the intervening space of lifeless sea.

"She looks peaceful enough now," said one of the crew to me; "but you ought to see her as I've seen her: ratching round the Horn under her topsails, scuppers awash, and the big fellows piling aboard as if determined to overwhelm her. Then you see a wind-jammer as she really is: a sea-fighter, depending not at all on machinery and the ingenious contrivances of this present-day civilization; but just a conglomeration of steel and wood and wire and hemp, built to "euchre God Almighty's storms and bluff the eternal sea"; then you'd begin to understand a thing or two. Seafaring isn't what it was—it's a pastime instead of hard labour; but so long as such packets as that keep afloat there's hope."

And, alas for his enthusiasm!—we were to hear at a

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later date that the splendid fabric had been totally wrecked on a reef fifty miles off New Caledonia : that Ocean Graveyard might reasonably be called, "The Port of Missing Ships."

Praise from Sir Hubert Stanley ! The Boss, after informing the Frenchman that the North-East Trades had not entirely gone out of business, complimented him on the appearance of his ship—which was well-deserved—and so, with mutual good-feeling, we trudged past her into lowering cloud-masses that soon developed into noisy squalls—little wind and much rain, until we hit one squall with more wind in it, and were compelled to shorten sail to combat the breeze on even terms.

We had decided to call at St. Paul's Rocks—a lonely outpost of Mother Earth almost exactly on the Line—and as we had no desire to overrun the land, engines were slowed down in order that we might sight the rocks at daybreak. There was nothing the matter with the *Quest's* navigation ; and soon after daylight we sighted our immediate haven, with the sun shining whitely on the barrenness of these deserted islets.

They are not in any way large : being merely the ultimate peaks of a deep-sunken mountain range, jutting up through the placid waters of the equatorial seas. The biggest of them is not more than two hundred yards long with a maximum altitude of sixty feet or thereabouts ; and from one end to the other they are smothered in guano, thanks to the sea-birds that rest there in unbelievable clouds. In the frequent squalls that rage about them, the wind-flung sprays leap high over their insignificant bulk ; and the hot tropical sun at once dries the spindrift into dazzling crystals of salt ; it is these crystals and the guano combined that make the islands look, at a distance, as if they were covered with newly-fallen snow.

Arriving within easy pistol-shot of the largest

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island, all sail was taken in and the surf-boat lowered. Shoals of ravenous sharks swarmed about the *Quest* as she lost her way : the water was whipped to whiteness by their quick movements. Without loss of time the first exploring party loaded themselves into the surf-boat, with gear for observations and provisions for the day, and moved off from ship to shore. I counted myself fortunate in being included in this party, which comprised Mr. Douglas, Major Carr, and myself, with a notable crew of Dr. Macklin, Mr. Jeffrey, and Mr. Eriksen, Mr. Wild being in charge at the tiller. We were landed, through the sullen surf, on one of the smaller rocks, and the boat returned to the *Quest* for a fresh load. Mr. Wilkins, with Mr. Hussey and Mr. Dell, the electrician, landed on the largest rock ; and by the time this difficult landing was effected Mr. Douglas, who was entrusted with the duty of making a comprehensive survey of the place, discovered that our small islet was not suitable for this purpose ; consequently it was necessary to hail the boat, load in all our gear, and proceed to the big island. During the reloading process Douglas was so keen and zealous that he allowed himself to be soused repeatedly by the grumbling surf. It was, indeed, a matter of no little difficulty to get anything into the boat, since its motion was so lively ; every time it came within reachable distance and we began to swing the load towards it, the backwash licked it out of reach again ; and so it was for all the world like playing a somewhat exasperating game of cup and ball. To beach the boat was impossible, for the simple reason that there was no beach : the rocks being steep-to, so that the first part of the boat to touch land was her stem. However, we managed the transhipment after a fashion.

Enormous numbers of crabs were a prominent feature of the island when we reached it ; they scuttled

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away with queer suggestions of terror at our arrival. Moreover, it was as though the rocks actually lived and breathed, by reason of the vast quantities of sea-birds that were everywhere, and so tame as to be ludicrous. You could go right up to them without their stirring, save to advance threatening beaks; and only when they were actually touched did they fly away, and then not very far. If they were sitting on their nests, as many of them were, they stayed put, contenting themselves with squawking and flapping their wings, which was their idea of defence.

So far as I could see—not being a naturalist—there were two kinds of birds common to the islands: the one was rather larger than an ordinary duck, brownish in colour, with big, webbed feet and a long, yellow, pointed bill. This bird—species unknown to me—emitted, when disturbed, a wild, squalling cry like an hysterical woman robbed of her only child: an infinitely pathetic sound. It made a fellow feel absolutely inhuman to touch these birds, once the queerness of it all had passed.

The other type was smaller, no bigger than an ordinary seagull, brownish-black in colour, and lacking webbed feet.

The young of the larger species, almost until reaching years of discretion, boast fluffy coats of white feathers of downy softness, and made one anxious to secure sufficient of their plumage to stuff a mattress that might be more kindly to one's projecting bones than the "donkey's breakfast" with which I was provided. The young of the smaller kind were quite ordinary: being, if anything, a shade darker than their parents. Flying-fish appeared to comprise the major portion of the larger birds' dietary, for we found many of these curious fish lying about the rocks in the vicinity of the nests. Not that these nests were architectural

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masterpieces by any means : they were merely rough scrapings in the ever-present guano : trifling bowls just sufficient to contain the eggs or the downy young.

Mr. Wilkins soon found material for his cameras. He was keen on securing impressions of life on St. Paul's Rocks; and quested about like a newspaper reporter in the silly season. He was fortunate enough to run upon what can only be described as a piscatorial drama : a huge crab that had discovered a dead fish and was working overtime to get it stowed inside. With all the stolidity of an Aberdeen granite-hewer, the crab was ripping off enormous chunks from its odoriferous catch and tucking them away. You'd have thought he was a small boy—not a Scout, of course—bagging apples from a forbidden orchard, with the owner of that orchard coming round the corner. Something like a score of smaller crabs were anxious to share his prize, but he had no intention of making a common cause of his salvage. Every time they advanced he dragged the fish bodily away; and when the smaller fellows showed a nasty, greedy disposition, he thought nothing of kicking them away to blazes-and-gone with his scrabbling hind-legs. Very evidently that apple "wasn't goin' to have no core ! "

Throughout the interesting morning Mr. Wilkins took photographs, both still and moving, of the life of the island : birds, crabs, even the fish swimming in the rockpools; and Mr. Dell and I assisted him to the best of our ability. We were all busy according to our capacity. In the afternoon Mr. Wilkins killed such birds as he required for specimens, and went on with his picture-making in order that those who only Britain know might learn somewhat of the outlying pickets of the earth. Mr. Douglas made a comprehensive survey of this largest island, taking Mr. Hussey and Major Carr to assist him; the latter also did some useful meteor-



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ological work, besides helping me in the bug-hunting labours relegated to me by our naturalist. Spiders and moths formed the greater part of our bag; and all were of interest, because they were so entirely different from the spiders and moths of home.

As for the boat's crew, they fished throughout the greater part of the day, catching small sharks and varied finny victims in considerable quantities. As sharks are not particularly appetizing food, they were thrown back into their native element after certain operations had been performed upon them which guaranteed that they, at any rate, would never more trouble harassed mariners.

All this work was done under a baking sun, striking with merciless savagery down from almost directly overhead. Our moving bodies threw no shadows whatsoever, but the glare from the rocks caused our skins to flame and burn with unbelievable thoroughness, so that when we returned to the *Quest* we looked more like a party of half-cooked negroes than white men.

That our observations might be thorough and of use to civilization, when once we were all embarked and the surf-boat housed on deck, the *Quest* steamed slowly round the entire group of mountain peaks, taking soundings as she went. Not until seven o'clock at night did we move off finally and wave farewell to what is, in my opinion, one of the most forlorn clusters of rock in all the world.

Forthwith we resumed the even run of shipboard duties: I myself acting as cook's mate when required, standing watch, taking the wheel, trimming and sifting coal; and all the time the sea was running high and the *Quest* doing herself proud in the matter of rolling. Such of us as did the tedious bunker work, in ten-minute shifts because of the stifling conditions below, cursed that St. Vincent coal heartily enough to set it

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on fire on its own account, but felt high reward when we were granted an afternoon's easy as a solace to choked lungs and aching limbs. There were no class distinctions among us, let it be known. I, the loblolly boy, worked side by side with the leaders of the expedition at what, ashore and in civilization, might have been considered menial tasks. The ship was absolutely a commonwealth, all hands working all-out for the common good; social distinctions were thrown overboard almost as soon as we left Plymouth. Thus were formed the bonds of a proved comradeship destined to stand us in good stead in the coming days of common peril, when every man might be required to depend upon his nearest neighbour for the boon of continued life.

Major Carr, during these days, conducted a series of meteorological experiments, although the uneasy motion of the ship rendered such work difficult in the doing. He sent up balloons and kites to test the currents of the upper air and secure the temperatures of those remote strata, all of which information is of great value in weather-forecasting and the like. One kite was lost. This work is rather interesting because, to one not versed in its complications, it is so infinitely mysterious. You send up a big kite, say, getting it up as high as you can, or as high as you wish; and then, up the same wire you dispatch a smaller kite—just as we used to send up messengers, as we called them—which messenger kite carries with it the complicated instruments by means of which the records are taken; afterwards these are tabulated day by day.

Infrequently, during the run to Rio—though it was more a crawl—I indulged in the luxury of a shave. I make a special point of mentioning this, because shaves were amongst the rarest events of existence those days. A memorable day; the Boss gave me further praise. I

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told the cook, because sometimes it is well to give others a correct estimate of yourself, as seen through eyes that are not biased by long and close companionship.

"The Boss asked me to make his tea for him this afternoon," I said. "And when he tasted it he said it was the best that had ever passed his lips."

"He always says that," said the cook with a dreadful sneer, "when anyone makes it but me—who'd be a cook, anyhow? All the dirty work, none of the fat! Who'd go to sea at all, if it comes to that?" But I made allowances for his liver suffering from the constant nearness to our stove, and forbore to press home my triumph.

Occasionally becalmed, not infrequently labouring in high seas, we trudged along the long and uneventful road to Rio, and early on the morning of November 21 sighted the South American coast. It is bold in its outline hereabouts, with the Sugar Loaf hill at the entrance to Rio Harbour striking a dominant note, and as we progressed and closed the land we secured exceptionally fine views of the scenery, a welcome spectacle to eyes long used to staring out over the unbroken horizons of the sea.

It had not been the Boss's original intention to make any call until we reached South Trinidad Island; but the engine-room defects were developing so rapidly, despite the overhaul at St. Vincent, that Sir Ernest discovered it absolutely necessary to secure further engineering assistance, and, moreover, the topmast and rigging were also giving no end of trouble, which it would not do to risk further. As Rio de Janeiro offered an excellent harbour of refuge, to that port we steered, and arriving off the harbour at midnight, cruised about until the dawn, for South American ports are all alike in the respect that no vessel may enter or leave between the hours of dark and dawn. I suppose this rule is enforced in order to prevent surprise revolutions taking place too often. The

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hobby of Latin America, so I was solemnly informed by those much older and wiser than myself, is revolutions, and there is a definite season for hanging Presidents to their own flagstaffs. I do not vouch for it; I only record what I was told. Apparently, when bored after a too long siesta, some South American will say: "It's a fine day; let's have a revolution!" And the others agree that life is lacking in excitement, so a revolution they have, and no one makes much ado about it, not even the late President, because he's generally past caring one way or the other. Only sometimes it is the usurper and not the up-to-the-moment occupant of the Presidential chair who decorates the flagstaff—it all depends.

On a brilliantly sunny morning, with the sky and sea rainbow-like in a welter of vivid colouring, we passed up amongst the little network of islands, and ran beneath the frowning sheer of the Sugar Loaf into what is surely the most beautiful harbour in all the world. Jealous Australians will tell me that I am wrong, and that Rio cannot beat Sydney; but as I've never seen Sydney, and I wager most of them have never seen Rio, I'll hold to my opinion. Rio is beautiful—with its richly clad slopes on either hand, its majestic size, and its clustering white-walled buildings along the cliff-tops. The water is as blue as sapphire; the sky above is radiant; and—there are worse places than Rio to visit, when one is wearied of much seafaring. And yet, not so very long ago, the very mention of Rio sent shivers through the spinal cords of honest sailormen. The place had an evil name for Yellow Jack, that most dreaded of plagues, and ships going there would lose every man of their crews; fresh crews would be sent out, these in their turn would die, and gradually the ships rotted away helplessly at their moorings for want of man-power to set them into open water. But those tragic days belong to past history. A progressive government, shaking off the

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apathy and lassitude of the South, drained the pestiferous swamps in which the fever-bearing mosquitoes bred, destroyed a few millions of the humming pests and made the port as healthy as any other port of the Southern hemisphere, perhaps. But here and there, in the backwaters of the harbour, they will still show the mouldering hulls of what once were proud ships—charnel houses of empire, I called them—which had failed to return to their homeland by reason of that dreaded “El vomito.”

Already, though the sun was not far above the horizon, it was growing amazingly hot; and when the port doctor visited us at 7.30, the heat was well-nigh unbearable. Until his visit took place the *Quest* was in quarantine, with the yellow flag flying at her foremast. No one might board her, none might leave, though boats swarmed about us as soon as we trudged up through the harbour-mouth and past the frowning forts that guard the entrance and make the bay well-nigh invulnerable. But the doctor surged up alongside in his speedy launch; there was an inundation of gilt-edge officials who all seemed to talk at once and very rapidly, so that our deck was like a fish-market; salutations were made, and—thanks to the magic of the White Ensign which we flew astern—the formalities of giving “pratique” were not overlong drawn-out. You begin to get some clear impression of the worth of the White Ensign when you stray beyond your own coastline. It is a veritable Open Sesame; bureaucratic difficulties melt away before the sight of it, and instead of doing all they can to hinder, the foreign Jacks-in-office bow and salute and oil the wheels to some effect.

Prior to making Rio we had treated the *Quest* to another spring-cleaning, painting her thoroughly in-board and out. She was now no longer white and yellow as to upperworks and funnel, but battleship grey, and her appearance was enormously improved. No one

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could ever call her beautiful, even at the best of times, but in her new clothing she certainly looked dignified and what she was: a pioneer ship embarked on a hazardous cruise. Even the country that owned the White Ensign had no cause to be particularly ashamed of her, I thought, as I saw her reflection mirrored in the crystal-like waters of the harbour.

We passed up the harbour and anchored off the city: a city of terraces and palms and much rich foliage. Many anchored craft dotted the surface of the water: handsome sailing ships, their spars a black forest against the eye-aching blue of the sky; powerful steamers, coast-wise craft—there was no end to the variety. And now we were treated to real tropical fruits and vegetables—luxuries that were trebly enhanced in value by reason of long abstinence. Sink your teeth into a juicy pineapple, bought for a penny, if you want to know what I mean. Or wolf a few of those queer, turpentiney mangoes, which disappoint you so much by reason of the big stone with its tough fibres, to which clings all that's best and sweetest of the pulp, until, in your aggravation you seriously contemplate getting into a filled bath—the best place by far wherein to devour mangoes—and indulging in a very orgy.

## CHAPTER VII

### Christmas in Southern Seas

THE *Quest* was subjected to a very thorough overhaul during her stay in Rio. Judging by the opinions of the experts Sir Ernest called into consultation, she needed it—she seemed to be wrong everywhere; and to venture down into the icebound South with her in her then condition was practically suicide.

First of all, her engines were surveyed, and the crank-shaft, which was the cause of most of our troubles, was properly aligned. The marvel seemed to be that we'd managed to come as far as we had done without meeting disaster. We'd met with a certain amount if it, anyhow—and we'd treated that impostor, as Kipling calls it, contemptuously. How we should treat triumph when that appeared we hardly knew. Did I mention that what are, in my opinion, the most stirring lines in English poetry, Kipling's "If," were posted up aboard us conspicuously as a sort of chart by which to steer our daily course?

Then, too, it was discovered that the propeller, which had churned astern so uncertainly, was far too heavy for the ship and her shaft; she was being racked to pieces by the violent vibration; and so a smaller, more complaisant propeller was shipped in place of our old friendly enemy. The scarfed topmast, that had caused more bad language than I like to remember, was condemned, and a new one furnished by the Brazilian Admiralty, who offered us every courtesy throughout, was shipped in its place. I should like to give a detailed description of these operations, but must leave the

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task to one better equipped with nautical knowledge than myself. But, as well as repairs, we recaulked and tarred the hull, which, like all wooden hulls, was disposed to leak consumedly. When a wooden ship is sailing on a wind, her weather side heaves out of the water a good deal, and, in tropical seas, the sun scorches down on the exposed timber with such merciless effect that, as soon as the vessel is put about and the once-high side is below the water-line, her open seams permit the water literally to pour in, and this keeps all hands busy at the pumps. Moreover, it makes the bilges extraordinarily unpleasant, for the stench of putrefying sea water is about the most stomach-turning odour I know.

We also enlarged our existing accommodation to the extent of erecting a new deck-house forrard of the old one, to serve as a dining-room, as the after mess-room was far too small to accommodate all hands. Since the *Quest* was to be our home for an indefinite period, we thought we deserved room in which to stretch ourselves.

Naturally enough, whilst these alterations were in progress, the ship became too small by far for us to live aboard; too, she was so uncomfortable when careened for caulking that we thought it no shame to live ashore, and accepted the ready hospitality that was offered to us on every hand. Slight changes were made, too, in our personnel; Mr. Eriksen returned home, and three new hands were shipped, one of them to carry on my old job of cook's mate.

We explored Rio pretty thoroughly during the month we were there. For it demanded a whole month to effect sufficient repairs to make us weatherly, spite of the Boss's growing impatience. No wonder he was impatient: the odds had been against us from the beginning. Here, and simply on account of defects, we were fully six weeks behind our programme, and that programme promised to need considerable amendment.



## Christmas in Southern Seas

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We marvelled at the beauty of Rio itself: a city of really stately buildings, broad boulevards, and thoroughly up-to-date improvements. We admired the very wonderful mosaic pavements, which are everywhere, a tribute to the patience of those who had laid them in this age when beauty has so constantly to give place to utility, and the labour of love seems to be becoming a thing of the past.

Furthermore, we climbed the famous Sugar Loaf, Vao d'Assucar being its Brazilian title. As I mentioned, this curious peak, ridiculously like one of the old sugar loaves that I understand used to decorate grocers' windows, dominates the entrance to Rio Harbour on the southern side, and towers vertically out of a placid sea a sheer two thousand feet into a cloudless sky. At one time its ascent was considered a feat second only to the conquest of the Matterhorn; and I remember reading a breathless story dealing with a young midshipman's conquest of the problem; but now modern ingenuity has effected a solution, and we modern adventurers ascended by means of a cable-car running to the summit. I suppose that if Julius Cæsar suddenly came back to life and decided to invade Britain again he would do it by aeroplane!

Even if we had been required to make the ascent in the primitive manner, our trouble would have been well rewarded, for, at night, staring out towards the city from the ultimate summit, seeing the countless lights reflected gloriously on the bay, I viewed what I consider to be the most enchanting scene I have ever clapped eyes on: a very City Beautiful, unreal and mystical, as it were a vision of Fairyland itself.

Rio heat can be very trying; but Nature has provided a remedy. Punctually at four o'clock in the afternoon, just when the soggy heat is becoming absolutely unbearable, when even to think requires impossible exertion,

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and to stir one's littlest finger calls for lengthy meditation and preparation, there suddenly comes a refreshing coolness in the air, pleasant wind-currents stir, the oppression lifts as if by magic and a tingling suggestion of well-being fills the veins. This wind is known as the "Rio Doctor," and its qualities are undoubtedly medicinal. But for that "Doctor," I fancy prolonged existence there for a white man would be unbearable.

Amongst other diversions, I visited a small troop of British and American Scouts, and amongst them spent a memorable evening. It is very gratifying to an enthusiastic Scout to see with his own eyes how far-flung is our movement, and what benefits it confers on those who are in it. Apart from the white Scouts there are many troops amongst the Brazilians; but, unfortunately, the movement amongst them, as in Germany, is, to my way of thinking, too much imbued with the military spirit, which in these days is being revealed as a worthless anachronism.

Owing to our long delay it was not until December 17 that we left Wilson's Island, where we had lain throughout the period of our overhaul, and dropped anchor again on the city side of the harbour in order to take aboard stores, water, and the other necessary impedimenta. Not that our alterations were by any means complete; but the Boss's impatience was growing to such an extent that he was firmly resolved to make shift with what was already done and chance his luck. Once the stores were aboard, we moved off again and dropped anchor in a lovely little bay on the Nictheroy side, not far from the harbour entrance; and here we found ourselves with as much work to tackle as was convenient. During refit all our past careful stowage had been necessarily disturbed, and as we had to prepare ourselves to face any kind of weather that might come along, we were as busy as bees, lashing, stowing, jamming,

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wedging, contriving innumerable ingenuities, and trimming the ship into a weatherly condition. A bathe was very welcome when daylight died.

Next morning work continued. We got something of a scare when an urgent message was received aboard, requiring Dr. Macklin to go ashore at once to see Sir Ernest, who had been taken suddenly ill. Off went the doctor, post-haste, but on arriving at the house where the Boss was staying as the guest of hospitable friends, he found him completely recovered and apt to make light of his temporary affliction. Sir Ernest was always the sort of man who made light of trouble: he merely stated that he had been troubled by a slight faintness and that he had actually sent for the doctor to make inquiry about stores; but afterwards we knew that this attack was an advance messenger to our gallant leader, warning him that the sands were running low in the glass of his life.

The shipping of a new cook's mate left me free for deck duties, and I saw an excellent chance of qualifying myself as a seaman. I started this Sunday morning by keeping an hour's anchor-watch: 2—3 a.m. Very quiet and wonderful the ship was during that hour of darkness, with those unforgettable stars blazing nobly in a sky that was for all the world like velvet. Then, during the forenoon, I helped Mr. Dell to set up a stay and rig halliards for the jib; proper sailorizing work this, and enjoyable. For, however enthusiastic a man may be, peeling potatoes can lose its interest and fail to convince the peeler that his labour is an essential aid to Polar exploration work! Whereas, when you're working with the gear that actually means the ship's safety and progress, you feel you're something that definitely counts in the scheme of things, and your pride swells enormously.

What with stowing and restowing, trimming and re-trimming, it was four in the afternoon before we finally

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got under way and, under easy steam, proceeded towards the entrance. A most invigorating "send-off" was ours as we departed; our Brazilian friends seemed determined to "do us proud"; they accompanied us in boats for a considerable distance, cheering themselves hoarse, firing salutes from guns they had thoughtfully brought with them. We answered with high-soaring rockets and our famous "Tally ho!" war-cry, and the scene was a very pandemonium of enthusiasm, invigorating to a degree. But we left the clamour behind, and, quickening speed, steamed out past the Sugar Loaf and the forts, down through the chain of islands, and so to open sea once more; and glad enough we were to feel the swing and lift of the gliding keel beneath us; for though our stay in Rio had been memorable, chockful of pleasure, and revealing the jovial thoroughness of Under the Line hospitality and encouragement, when you're embarked on a definite quest you want to get on with the business in hand, and lying tugging at your anchors won't help you to overcome the troubles of open sea.

I had the wheel during the second dog-watch, and the Boss was on the bridge. Knowing how terribly he had worried throughout our stay in the Brazilian port, it was invigorating to discover him so cheerful and enthusiastic; he had shed the burden of his woe, and talked to Wild and Worsley very animatedly about his experiences ashore. An accident to Jeffrey—his leg was injured—promised to keep him more or less *hors-de-combat* for a considerable time; Macklin said three weeks in bed was absolutely necessary. Jeffrey, a man of action and the exact opposite of a shirker, grumbled ferociously at this sentence; but the doctor knew best, and instead of three weeks it was six before he was fit for the fighting line again. Sir Ernest volunteered to stand his watch for him. Here, again, he gave evidence

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of his thought for others and his unwillingness to add to their burdens, no matter how weighty those he took upon his own shoulders might be. Had he done as some men would have done, and required his officers to share sick Jeffrey's work between them, he could have given himself greater easement; maybe averted the tragedy that was already touching him with the shadow of its wings; but no, he acted up to his motto throughout and played the man to the very end.

During the night the sea began to get up more than a bit, and tested our recent stowage work to the full. The decks became almost impassable by reason of the confusion. Drums of oil, crates of fruit, heavy packing-cases, everything that was not actually bolted to the ship's framework seemed on the run. It was like chasing excited pigs to secure many of the loose articles, for the oil splashed about in earnest fashion, and even when you got a grip on a wallowing cask your fingers would slide off its chines, and away would go the cask, as the ship saucily hove herself up on end, for all the world like that runaway gun in Victor Hugo's book. So that, what with one thing and another, it took us all day to get things set to rights and the decks squared up.

One part of my work consisted in clearing the chart-room for action. The Boss summoned me at 7 a.m. to do this, and seemed peeved about the prevalent disorder. No wonder; his orderly soul must have been in utter revolt against the chaos that reigned. Everything that had been overlooked, everything that had come aboard at the last minute seemed to have been heaved into the chart-room. There were bundles of clean washing on top of the chronometer lockers, oddments of all kinds littered the place. Most of these belonged to Mr. Wilkins and Mr. Douglas, who had started off three weeks before for South Georgia to make scientific observations. Owing to our long delay in Rio our

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meditated call at Cape Town was ruled out, and it was necessary to alter the original plan of campaign. It should be remembered that much of our gear had been sent on in advance to Cape Town, which was to be our base. Shackleton, accordingly, made up his mind to wash out Cape Town, and avail himself of the resources of South Georgia, where dogs and impedimenta might be obtained, thanks to an ill-fated German expedition that had left much of its equipment there in pre-war days.

"Carry that gear down below into the fo'c'sle, and treat it kindly," said the Boss. "Always remember that you think twice for an absent shipmate where you'd think once for yourself." So I gradually brought order out of chaos, thereby easing Shackleton's not unnatural peevishness, and then got out on deck to make myself generally useful.

We were carrying a full press of canvas, but as the wind was falling light, notwithstanding the boisterousness of the sea, it was decided to shorten sail, and the topsail was accordingly clewed up. Dr. Macklin and myself went up aloft to make it fast; and this was my first experience on a topsail yard. It was rather like being tied to the end of a piece of elastic. You'd never think one small ship could be so vigorous in her motions as was the *Quest*. One minute I was sliding down an apparently unfathomable chasm, the next I was perched high aloft, staring down with mingled scorn and apprehension on my opposite number who was busily engaged in furling the other side of the sail. "One hand for yourself and one for the expedition," was the maxim that had long ago been instilled into me, so you may believe me when I say that the hand for myself was busily employed! It was a nightmarish experience, but the topsail was ultimately made fast, and the ship's liveliness seemed to diminish as a result.

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It was a relief to turn in after all these adventures and win some sleep; but at midnight I was out again, to find the engines stopped and the ship rolling as if she intended to have the masts out of herself, for her headway was stopped and she had fallen off into the trough of the sea. Once again our engines were causing trouble: the circulating pump had gone "phutt," and it was necessary for all hands to turn out and pump the bilges clear. A lovely job, there in the darkness, with the ship trying to tie knots in herself! And bilge water is so pleasant! Pumping is a back-aching job at best, but when you're performing nautical gymnastics throughout your spell it exercises every muscle in your body, and you marvel at the number of muscles you possess, when they're all aching at once! Still, the engine-room staff quitted themselves like men, repaired the damage, and got us under way once more; and the day broke fine with a calming sea and enough of a breeze to warrant the setting of all plain sail. This eased matters considerably, the erratic motion subsided, and all was well. In the afternoon, by way of variety, I was instructed to trim coal for the stokehold. Rio was hot; we are led to believe that there is even a hotter place, but if it is no worse than in the *Quest's* bunkers down here in the tropics, I have no fear of the future. The particular bunker selected for my attention was situated quite close to the boiler. It left a baker's oven ridiculously behind, so far as heat was concerned, and the coal-dust—phew! Not that I'm grumbling, mark you, the job had to be done, and there was no reason why I should have been excused; but it is my way to relate impressions.

I found out a way to make even this existence tolerable—man, especially a Scout man, being an adaptable animal. I threw down exactly sixty shovelfuls of coal, that being my extreme limit; then I dived for the stoke-

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hold, with the enthusiastic eagerness of a Bromley-kite after a dead Malay, and emerged into that comparative ice-chest in an avalanche of dust, small coal, and bigger lumps, with the shovel clattering triumphantly between my legs. In the stokehold I got a breath of air that was not entirely solid, remembered that mine it was to do or die, and got back to the bunker just in time to satisfy the demands of the stoker on duty. A great game!

Evidently my success at this ploy was so conspicuous that I was employed throughout the following day in the bunkers as a reward of zeal. But the weather was cooling somewhat now, and the conditions were not so irksome; yet sleeping on deck was becoming more of a pain than a pleasure, and I found my bunk in the wardroom quite inviting.

Then, on the next day, I completed my bunker work, to my great satisfaction, and resumed duty on deck. The weather overhead was fine, the sea was growingly vigorous. On this day I saw my first albatross. It was sitting on the water, and at first sight looked to be nothing more important than a large gull; but when it took wing and skimmed away, I got an impression of perfect and amazing flight. It took things in most leisurely fashion, obtaining the greatest amount of result with the least expenditure of energy—circling our mastheads with supreme insolence, without so much as the quiver of a wing. It was one of the Wanderer class, I was told; but its wanderings ceased when it came upon us, for it accompanied us south with the greatest pertinacity, living on the scraps thrown overboard from the cook's galley.

Also, we saw a "Portuguese man-o'-war"—a nautilus; a flimsy, bewildering, beautiful sea-curiosity, with its sails that looked like mother-o'-pearl all fairly set to the breeze. Albatrosses and nautiluses are seldom seen



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in company—but we were favoured by witnessing this remarkable combination.

It was amusing to watch the envy and admiration with which our two flying men—Carr and Wilkins—studied the manœuvres of the albatross. Both of them, apparently, thought that if they possessed ingenuity sufficient to enable them to construct a heavier-than-air machine that would duplicate that effortless motion, their fortunes would be made and their undying fame assured. They talked throughout the day in a jargon that was entirely unintelligible to me about vol-planing, and stalling, and banking, and at the end resolved that Nature was a greater inventor than mere man.

Just about now, too, there was a certain amount of merriment in the ship owing to Carr being required to improve the accommodation below. It takes very little to arouse a laugh on shipboard, where stern hard work is the prevailing note; and we were grateful to our amateur carpenter for permitting us to laugh at his well-meant efforts, which, though rough and crude, suited the conditions. Despite the alterations that had been made at Rio, the down-below accommodation was still limited, and every man had to stow himself away in as small a space as was compatible with continued existence. If in a future state I am ever destined to become a sardine, I shall know that I've had good training in the art of close stowage!

As the wind was coming away fair and with a force that promised added speed, the foresail and staysail were taken in and the square-sail set. The promise was fulfilled, and now we romped along in an inspiring manner through a quickening sea that slapped happy little wavelets against our quarter and threw occasional wisps of spindrift aboard. In the main the day was somewhat misty, and there was a heavy swell running as though promising an increase of the wind—what

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Kipling calls "The high-running swell before storm, grey, formless, enormous, and growing." It's astonishing to me how Kipling, himself no sailor, understands the sea so well! He seems to have got right down to the very inwardness of open water, and if he'd been a trained sailor he couldn't understand the sea's mysteries and wonderments better than he does.

The day of Christmas Eve broke to show us a moderate sea and a refreshing west-south-west wind. During the entire day this breeze increased, with frequent squalls and a gloomy, lowering sky, and the wise-aces amongst us prognosticated bad weather. Of course it is always safest to prophesy bad weather at sea, because you naturally make up your mind that it is coming and prepare yourself for any emergency; and then, if it doesn't eventuate, you thank your lucky stars for continued good times. But on this occasion the portents proved correct: before night a big sea was running, and the wind, from menacing whistle, increased to that deep thunderous note of striving which indicates the nearness of a pukka storm. We began to ship water—nothing to worry about, but still enough to drown out the dynamo, as a result of which catastrophe our lights were extinguished and we were compelled to resort to the oil-lamps by way of illumination.

While shortening sail one of the clews of the square-sail, carrying heavy block and shackle, whipped sharply across the deck and caught Carr a sickening blow in the face. He was literally clean knocked out, but contrived to come back to time, and with his hands to his face, and the blood flowing all too freely through his fingers, tried to carry on. But this wasn't to be permitted; he was sent below for the attentions of the doctor, who diagnosed a broken nose. The doctor and his assistant worked assiduously to restore the unfortunate's nasal organ to its pristine beauty, but though

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they satisfied themselves they failed to satisfy the sufferer, who did his best, in front of a mirror, to flatter his own mild vanity. He made such a poor attempt that the work had all to be done over again, and during the operation Hussey consoled him with impertinent remarks concerning the effect his face would have upon the women of England if he tampered with it any further.

This was a funny Christmas Eve, however, far different from those of the past. To palliate our present uncomfortable conditions, we endeavoured to create a vicarious atmosphere by remembering previous Christmases. Here were we, a congregation of desperate adventurers, collected from all the corners of the world, isolated for our sins in a little, tossing ship that seemed pitifully small to engage with the massed forces of the southern seas; all of us separate entities, dependent upon our imaginations for recreation. We talked about Christmases past, and groaned in spirit when we reflected upon their glories; and then, as nothing was to be gained thereby, we went on to picture the ideal Christmas we would wish to spend. Opinions varied very considerably. Sentimentally, we mostly drew passionate sketches of snow-covered fields and church spires pointing upwards, and waits and skating and honest Christmas fare, carefully omitting, needless to say, the consequent, inevitable indigestion! It is rather queer how the exile invariably pictures Christmas as a snow-smothered festival, whereas the average Christmas, according to my experience, is chiefly remarkable for its entire lack of snow!

Anyhow, we all decided unanimously that the Christmas dinners of the past were to be mere shadows as compared with the Christmas dinners of to-morrow; for Mr. Rowett and his considerate wife had made their arrangements well in advance, and the ship was

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excellently well supplied with rich and luscious fare. Certain cases, carefully stowed and treated with exaggerated respect, were rumoured to contain turkeys, hams, puddings, and all those ameliorations which go to make Christmas what it is; and on this note of gastronomical anticipation we welcomed the Day.

Alas! alas! we builded our hopes on foundations of shifting sand!

Christmas Day, down there in southern latitudes—where it was officially midsummer—dawned bleak and grey and threatening. The wind during the night had increased to a very good imitation of a real gale, and the ship was showing precisely what she could do in the way of uneasy motion. A cork could not have been more lively in the sea that was kicked up by the droning velocity of the unleashed winds. So far as I myself was concerned, a happening occurred that threatened to make me entirely indifferent to this Christmas Day, or indeed any others that might gladden the world. My job was to maintain a look-out on the bridge—the fore-castle by this time being so constantly washed by whole water that the normal look-out position had become untenable. The officer of the watch sent me below for a tin of milk wherewith to make more palatable his morning coffee, and off I started, full of zeal. Crossing the poop I felt the *Quest* poise and quiver preparatory to taking one of her solar-plexus-disturbing pitches. A big, formidable grey-bearded comber swung up out of the obscurity, gathering weight as it came; it towered high, growing—always growing. Then it fell, right atop of me, washed me clean off my feet and promised to wash me overboard; but with a natural desire for a long life as well as a merry one, I clung to what came handiest, a bit of the covering-board, and held on. Noisy water covered me, I felt myself drowning; but the ship kicked up her stern with a saucy irresponsi-

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bility, the water receded, to the accompaniment of thunderous growls, and I continued to exist. But I was as nearly overboard as a toucher; and considering the sea that was running it is doubtful if a boat could have been launched to the rescue. However, all's well that ends well, and the watch-officer got his tin of milk in the long run.

Let it be recorded here and now, how wonderful a sea-boat the *Quest* is. I have probably mentioned the fact before, but it cannot be too strongly emphasized. She seems designed to stand weather that would make the biggest Atlantic liner quail. Small and light, she rises triumphantly to the noisy crest of the biggest waves, and stares down in supreme scorn at the welter of disturbed water beneath her. Always she seems to be laughing in her sleeve at the clamorous immensity of the combers, as though deriding their efforts to overwhelm her. She is wonderful, a ship to be proud of, a ship to trust! She seems to look on the whole business as something of a game; and, instead of shipping vast masses of destructive water as a bigger vessel would, dodges the big fellows, kicks them under her keel, and roars up splendidly to the foamy summits to twiddle her fingers at the Atlantic's worst. Of course, even the *Quest* shipped water, but not in sufficient quantities to tear away her bulwarks, stave in her hatches, and generally tear her timbers apart, as might well have happened in the case of a bigger ship.

But what she gained in seaworthiness she atoned for in her liveliness. By breakfast-time she was heaving herself about in an unimaginable fashion, so much so that it was impossible to keep anything on the table. Everything was thrown about, and the fiddles proved worthless as a safeguard; and, for this reason, the actual ceremonial of Christmas was wisely postponed. To cook a satisfactory meal was a problem beyond even the

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cook's skill and resourcefulness, though there is no doubt that Green was the hero of the day. He did his best; but when the kettle hits a man in the eye, and the soup-pot empties itself into his waistcoat, and the stove thoughtfully discharges its hissing embers on his feet, and every now and then a wave slaps in and extinguishes the newly-kindled fire, and the floor is swimming knee-deep in greasy brine, what can a man do that would not cause derision in the mind of a Parisian chef? The Boss gave orders that the impossible was not to be attempted, and lacking turkeys and the kindred delights of Christmas, we satisfied ourselves with heroic sandwiches of bully beef and bread, eating them as best we could manage, stowed away in the alleyways for the most part, with our feet and bodies well braced for steadiness against the soul-stirring rolls of the ship to which we had entrusted our fortunes. Green, like the hero he was, unexpectedly provided us with piping hot cocoa, and considering how thoroughly drenched and chilled we were—for there was no shelter worth the name to be found—the steaming beverage was better to be desired than nectar and ambrosia and all the fabulous delights of the gods. What though its flavour was reminiscent of the bilges! It heartened us and stimulated us to a nicety, and we asked for nothing better—at least, we might have asked, but with scant prospect of receiving.

Notwithstanding all seafaring difficulties, Green, determined that we should have some sort of a hot meal for dinner. A thick stew resulted, which we did not attempt to analyse too closely, but ate and were thankful for. Such as wished it were also served with a tot of grog, wherewith to drink the healths of the promoter of the expedition and his wife; and then we compared notes of Christmases past again, and discovered what a queerly assorted company we were. From Central Africa, Iceland and Singapore, from New York, Har-

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burg and Lithuania, from Mauritius, Rio and Cape Town, from London and Aberdeen, and, seemingly, all the cities of the world, we'd drifted towards this restless speck now wallowing in the run of a South Atlantic sea, as a witness that the call of adventure can never overpass the widest limits of the world.

And that all things might be finished in real slapdash style, a big sea lolloped aboard, insinuated itself down the after-companion and saturated my bunk. Truly a merry, merry Christmas; but what of it!

And this Christmas Day brought us many greetings, if not from absent friends, at least from the birds of the air, which were about us in great numbers: albatross, mollymauks, whale-birds, Cape pigeons—their name was legion.

Boxing Day brought an improvement in our conditions; the wind was lessening, although the sea still ran high, and with only our fore-and-afters set, we logged an even six knots, which was to us almost a racing pace. As an offset to improved circumstances outboard we developed inboard defects again—and the chief of these promised to be really serious, for our main fresh-water tank sprang a leak, and before it was discovered the tank was dry and our precious store of drinking water was washing nastily about the odoriferous bilges. The Boss took this accident very much to heart; it seemed as though ill-fortune had dogged him throughout the voyage; but all the worrying in the world could not mend matters, and the only thing to do was to practise the most rigid economy in using what little fresh water still remained, reserving it for drinking and cooking only, endeavouring to satisfy all our other needs with seawater pure and simple, though a little oily water was being distilled from the engine-room exhaust tank. Fortunately the weather was growing considerably cooler, and our thirsts were slaked automatically.

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Next day, though the wind was still blowing fairly hard, it was fair, and we set the squaresail to take full advantage of it. No luck! Hardly was it set than the out-haul carried away, and down came the canvas for repair, which was effected with commendable swiftness, so that by breakfast-time the sail was again set, and in obedience to the weight of wind in it the *Quest* began to romp along like a cup winner. The number of albatrosses accompanying us now was growing; they are wonderful birds, and well worth watching. Gigantic, too, some of them are, with a stretch of wing somewhere about fourteen feet, and an ability to fly untiringly without any perceptible exertion. As the day progressed the wind freshened, and by four bells in the middle watch a full gale from the W.N.W. was rioting about us. Coming on deck at this time I was greeted with the awe-inspiring sight of a favouring gale, with big seas galloping in our wake like hungry monsters eager to overtake and devour us. Dark though the night was, the phosphorescent gleam of the foam was so vivid as to give one a fine impression of the elemental tumult that raged on-board. The seas were being kicked up with truly astonishing velocity, and the hissing rumble of them as they piled along our rails was a sound to remember for many a long day.

As the wind was well away on the quarter the engines were unnecessary, so under squaresail and topsail alone the *Quest* flashed merrily southward. We were logging a steady nine knots by this time—better than we'd ever done before, even with engines working and all sail set; a mightily invigorating sensation it was, I must admit.

At four o'clock I went to the wheel, not without a certain amount of trepidation, for the ship appeared a lively problem to tackle, rioting about as she was. This was by far the most strenuous trick I'd experienced, for the following sea played the mischief with her stern and



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threw it so recklessly about that only by dint of constant twirling of the spokes was it possible to steer even an approximate course. The helm was hard a-port or hard a-starboard all the trick—there was none of that old easy turning of a spoke either way. The ship seemed to go mad; she took the bit in her teeth, and fretting at the control, simply reared, and capered, and plunged, and bucketed until you'd think she was incapable of further exertion; but just as you satisfied yourself that she was quietening down, away she went again, taking the whole circle of the compass to play with, so that my heart was in my mouth most of the time for fear she might broach to and, coming broadside on to the threshing combers, capsize and finish the matter once and for all.

Yet it was thrilling, magnificently so, to realize that I'd got this boisterous vessel between my hands and was master of her destinies. The clamour of the gale was nothing, the level drive of spindrift as the roaring wind clipped off the wave-crests and hurled them aboard was but a challenge to war. Mr. Wild, who had the watch, was not at all anxious to rid us of the benefit of this good fair wind; and he cracked on for all he was worth, in regular, old-fashioned clipper style, and imagined he was back in his younger days when steam seemed a poor servant and spray-washed canvas the one great thing that counted, and when he was relieved at four o'clock he passed the word to keep on carrying on. This we did until six, when the Boss decided that we'd run quite far enough, and that now was the time to heave-to, since a ship making no headway at all is better than a ship plunging to the bottom of the sea. I, being off duty, had just turned in and was dropping off into that sleep which comes as a reward for much honest toil, when I was rudely awakened by a sanakatowzer of a sea that, obeying a purposeful weather-roll of the ship, had

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boarded us and was flooding down the companionway towards my berth, which, unfortunately for me, lay right in its track. I got out on deck as nimbly as I've ever done it, and there was compelled to sheer awe by the affrighting majesty of the waves, which were towering now to our very trucks, so far as my impression went, though I'm told the biggest was not more than forty feet in height from trough to crest.

I wish I had the pen of a writer to do justice to the majesty of the gale as it now was. The wind had increased to hurricane force; and the purposeful intent of the white-bearded combers as they piled and grew and added others and yet others to themselves and then bore down upon us, must have been seen to be understood. All hands were summoned to shorten sail and get the ship ready for heaving-to, and with the utmost difficulty the big squaresail was mastered, by the process of running the *Quest* directly away before the gale, and letting the big canvas down by the run, with all hands leaping like furies to throw themselves upon its slatting, cracking, thunderous mass, to quieten it on the foredeck. Dell injured himself pretty severely in this operation; he paid the price of his own activity, for he fouled his foot in a rope when jumping to help another man who'd got too much to tackle single-handed, and came such a smasher to the deck that it was many a month before he was himself again.

Once the squaresail was mastered the topsail was clewed up, and Worsley and Macklin went aloft to stow it, which they did in seamanlike fashion, despite the trying conditions under which they laboured. Then, under a reefed staysail, we hove-to, to wait for better times.

Heaving-to was a ticklish task, but thanks to the prime seamanship of our officers it was effected without disaster, and although all hands were ordered into the rigging when the *Quest* was eased up to the wind, in

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case big water should drench her; and although whole seas had thundered over our bows whilst running, never a drop of water worth the mentioning was shipped as the helm was put down and the bow came gentle creeping up towards the run of the seas. In order to give us greater easement the wheel was lashed down and oil-bags were put over the bows, where they trailed ahead, and, leaking oil steadily, created an almost miraculous effect on the turbulent seas. It was most curious to watch a towering, foamy crest come hurtling towards us, growing as it came, as though intent on our instant overwhelming; but when within about fifteen yards of the bow it would suddenly loose its viciousness, flatten out, and slink as though ashamed of its previous bullying uproar, smoothly under our bows. It took in all some sixty gallons of oil to master that broken water, but it was worth it! Not that the ship's motion was eased much thereby, she still rolled and pitched consumedly, but the savage assault of the greybeards was lessened, and, although uncomfortable, we realized that we were no longer in actual danger.

A little water certainly lopped on board, quite enough to fill the waist and wash out the galley fire; but when our delayed breakfast-time came round Green, whom nothing could daunt on shipboard, served out substantial sandwiches to the satisfaction of all hands, and these we ate whilst collected round the lee door of the galley, washing them down with some hot decoction of mingled flavours which our cook had apparently managed to create out of nothing.

By three o'clock in the afternoon the back of the gale was broken, and by seven it was deemed safe to get under way again, with the engines moving easily.

It was necessary to pump continuously now, however, because the ship was making a good deal of water, but gradually, through the hours of night, wind and sea

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abated. After breakfast we took in our storm staysail and set the jib, topsail and squaresail, and proceeded upon our lawful occasions. There was no little stowing and securing to be done, as was only natural; for such a blowing as we had passed through was enough to test the stoutest lashings; particularly was the surf boat in danger; but all was made Bristol fashion again, and as the sprays were no longer breaking inboard I took advantage of the betterment to dry my blankets and clothes, which sorely needed it.

And now, once more, our ill-luck waited on us; again it was the engine-room. The engineer had discovered a serious leak into the furnaces from the boiler, and it was a leak that could not be repaired at sea. The Boss had serious thoughts that it might mean the total relinquishment of the adventure, and this worried him enormously. All through, from the very commencement—long before the *Quest* left London indeed—worry had piled on worry, and Sir Ernest had overcome difficulties that must certainly have daunted a man of much less stout fibre than his. But he gave instructions that if the leak developed steam pressure must be reduced, and so we carried limpingly along, making the best of it, since this wasn't precisely the yachting trip it had appeared to be in more genial waters.

## CHAPTER VIII

### We Run into Ice

ON the night following the easing up of the storm I got a fine sleep, and all the troubles we'd experienced seemed to fade into insignificance. Sleep is a great healer of wounds and it soothes many a problem. But in the morning there was a pretty big sea running and the wind was high, whilst, as the feverish pitching of the hull caused the propeller to race so disconcertingly that it appeared determined to twist itself off and sink down to rest on the ocean floor, the engines were stopped and the ship proceeded under sail alone. I had the wheel on this morning; but I'd got the knack of handling her by now, and found it none so irksome. The wind kept on freshening all the time—not to the same proportions as those of our recent blow, but some of the black squalls were heavy enough to set the rigging harping with the real storm-note, which is an inspiring sound—and we shipped quite a lot of water over the bows. So, as the conditions seemed to be worsening rather than improving, we hove-to again after lunch, with the mizen and staysail set; and the clank of the pumps recommenced.

Down below everything was soaked, even Sir Ernest's cabin and Mr. Wild's had suffered with the rest. The Boss's bunk was so completely saturated that he had a bed made up on the wardroom settee; though he used this makeshift berth only a little, for during the bad weather he was almost constantly on the bridge, though his officers, sensing that all was not well with him, repeatedly urged him to go below and rest. But

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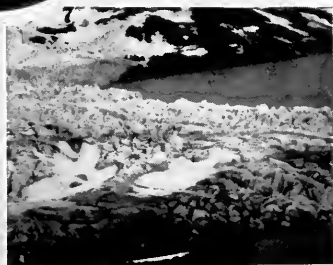
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instead of resting he actually stood another officer's watch in addition to his own in order that his subordinate might secure what he considered to be much-needed rest. That, of course, was Shackleton all over, one of the qualities that made him a leader.

But certain of the officers were growing uneasy; they thought the Boss was doing far too much, taking more out of himself than he should have done; and yet, despite their protests, Sir Ernest said: "You fellows are tired and must get rest; leave the ship to me." And from that he would not be shifted, although he must have known in his own heart that the strain was telling more unbearably every day.

Throughout the day the wild conditions continued; but, abating somewhat towards three in the morning, way was once more got on the ship and the voyage proceeded. Some idea of the havoc wrought by the pouring seas was conveyed to my mind when I baled out Sir Ernest's cabin, which was literally awash with dirty water, everything floating about at hazard, the whole presenting anything but an inviting spectacle. But a bit of conscientious swabbing restored things, and in a while, with a light breeze and a calming sea, it was almost impossible to believe that we had weathered such a snorter as had befallen us.

So the Old Year came to an end; its departure signalled by a double ringing of the ship's bell; and we looked forward with better heart to 1922. I had the first wheel of the New Year—from midnight to 2 p.m.; the sea was smooth and the wind just sufficient to be comfortable, so that we ran along easily under fore and aft canvas alone. After breakfast I came in for a bit of amateur engineering, being detailed to assist the second engineer to repair the deck-winch—an interesting if somewhat greasy task. The wind was dropping; in place of the turbulent waters which had thrashed us so



1. South Georgian Whaling Station: At Work on Blue Whales.
2. Some Finny Spoil from St. Paul's Rocks.
3. Launching the Kite for Aerial Observation.
4. Sir Ernest's Cabin on the *Quest*.
5. Penguins at Home.
6. Dead Whales in Prince Olaf Harbour.
7. View from above a South Georgia Glacier.



Cape Pigeons at South Georgia.



Gentoo Penguins. (Note the Baby Penguin in Centre.)



## We Run into Ice

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unkindly, a long, oily swell ran across to the narrowed horizon, and a wet mist drooped over all, a mist that later turned to heavy rain, persistent rain, which was by way of being a blessing to people limited in their fresh water supply. To-day I sighted my first penguin; it was swimming some distance away from the ship, and, as an inhabitant of the waste world of the South, was an object of considerable interest.

The weather was becoming increasingly cold; and already many of the members of the crew had donned clothing that gave them the look of Antarctic explorers; most of them, also, were growing beards, which gave them the aspect of pirates who had lost all self-respect. Early on the morning of the 2nd of January we passed quite close to a large school of whales, and later on vast numbers of penguins and other Antarctic birds. The temperature having dropped to 38, a close look-out was kept for the ice this temperature indicated, and at 10 a.m. our first iceberg was plainly in sight, though but a mere speck on the horizon. I don't know what the others felt; I know I was decidedly thrilled, for this was the far-flung sentinel of those vast defences that it was our aim to penetrate. It was like seeing an enemy's picket and knowing that away behind him were massed formidable odds against which, indomitably, we must pit our strength and courage.

Course was altered, and by one o'clock we were abreast the berg; no monster, but all the same, quite big enough to be impressive. It was a hundred feet high—which means seven hundred feet were submerged, as icebergs only show one-eighth their bulk above the surface; and, judging by the gaping fissures in its sides, it was an old-stager, rapidly tiring of life and returning to its native element as quickly as it could. It looked very austere, very cold, though undeniably beautiful, with the blue cavern boring into its massiveness. The sea

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about was strewn with smaller pieces of ice which had broken away and not yet melted; these formed what I was told is called the tail of the berg. By the time we had passed it fairly the sun was dropping down the western sky in a blaze of scarlet and saffron and gold; an inspiring sight that reminded me of that picture of Turner's, "The Fighting Téméraire."

During the middle watch two more bergs were seen, without difficulty, for they show up whitely, and seem to give off a curious illumination, called "ice-blink" by old-timers; so there is slight difficulty in avoiding them. The blacker the night is the more perceptible the ice-blink; it is chiefly between lights that the sharpest look-out must be kept. Nevertheless, whenever in the neighbourhood of ice a very careful watch must be maintained, for in addition to the lofty bergs there are also "growlers," washed masses of ice that lie low in the water, lurking evilly as though anxious only to tear the bottom out of a ship and fling her helpless to the sea-floor below. But even with growlers the seas that race over them and cause the growling note, from which they take their name, create sufficient noise to give a timely warning; and sharp eyes can detect the thin, white line of the water breaking upon them.

Bergs come from two sources. Either they may be large pieces broken away from the Great Ice Barrier which hems in the Southern Continent, or they may have detached themselves from some great glaciers, which glaciers "calve" periodically, on account of their resistless forward movement down the ravines they create towards the sea. Most Antarctic bergs are flat-topped, lacking those fantastic pinnacles that are usually associated with bergs; but many of them are enormous masses, several square miles in extent and weighing millions of tons. Not that the bigger fellows are the more picturesque, they are only awe-inspiring.

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Gradually, acted on by rain above and warm currents of the sea below, the berg wears away, whole acres are detached, and in the course of time the vast concern capsizes; and it is a capsized berg that is the most beautiful, for its outlines—worn by the action of the currents—are indeed picturesque.

Fine weather continuing, it was possible to settle down again to an orderly routine, and Jimmy Dell found me sufficient work to keep me from fretting. I learnt the art of splicing—working on the topsail sheet; and as lamp-trimmer, too, I was occupied in getting the steaming lights into shape. Maybe it was the strenuous nature of this work that caused me to commit the unmentionable sea-crime of giving a late relief next morning. I was aroused by the skipper yelling down the hatch that eight bells had gone, and I made a record turn-out, being on the bridge within one minute of the alarm. As a rule, I sleep very lightly; but this morning I erred, failed to respond to the usual call at one bell, and so slept on. But I think that quick turn-out made amends!

It was the Boss's watch on deck, and during my trick at the wheel he talked to me with the utmost freedom and enthusiasm of his last memorable expedition, and pointed out the route by which he had crossed South Georgia, the land that was now in view ahead and towards which we were making for refit and overhaul. He called it "a land of storm"; and the term fits it well. It is a little, lonely island situated in the very south of the South Atlantic Ocean, amongst the stormiest seas of all the world. It is over a thousand miles from Cape Horn—the sailors' graveyard—and nearly three thousand from the Cape of Good Hope. Captain Cook discovered it in 1775, and no doubt was sorry such a dreary wilderness existed. For a long time it was the happy hunting-ground of American sealers,

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who played such havoc with the valuable fur-seal with which the island then abounded that these animals are now practically extinct. To-day this far-flung outpost of the British Empire—for South Georgia is a British possession, and surely one of its most dismal—is the headquarters of five permanent whaling stations, one of them British, one Argentine, and the rest Norwegian.

At this time of year—official summer—the snow was present on the mountains in patches, but the valleys which open very invitingly to the sea were all white. In each valley was a glacier which ended abruptly at the water's edge in a high, pale blue wall. But the whole aspect of the island was grim and forbidding: a wilderness of rock and ice.

Preparations were put in hand for entering harbour; the doctor, with me helping, put a genuine harbour-stow on the sails, and squared up all ropes and gear forward into an orderliness that would not have disgraced a man-of-war. As we plodded on towards our destination large numbers of penguins insisted on popping up unexpectedly out of the still water alongside, and Cape pigeons were numerous. Shortly after 3 p.m. we dropped anchor in the safe and sheltered harbour of Gritviken, near to the whaling station.

The old-timers amongst the crew were in their element now; you'd have thought they had suddenly come in sight of home. Particularly was the Boss exultant; he kept on pointing out familiar sights, and the weight of depression that had recently troubled him was quite shaken off. He was brimming over with vigour and energy, as happy as a sand-boy, and sniffed the air like a war-horse scenting a far-off battle. Sight of past victories must have quickened the fighting blood in his veins, and he could hardly restrain himself from rushing ashore at once. There was so much to do and so little

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time to do it in, that he felt as though every second were precious.

The water of the harbour was red with blood, and everywhere was the awful, nauseous stench of rotten whale carcasses. Whale oil may be a very necessary thing, but it is beastly in its securing! Several whalers were anchored near where we lay, and alongside the rough wooden quay lay an Argentine barque and a Norwegian cargo steamer.

We were promptly visited by the manager of the whaling station, who went ashore with the Boss, who was bursting with lively zeal; and as soon as possible such of us as were to be spared, pulled ashore in the surf boat, to watch the process of flensing a whale on the slip. For whalers nowadays do not cut-in and try-out their blubber in open water—they tow their catches into harbour where machinery exists for the purpose. The Norwegians who worked at the flensing struck me as being mighty heavy and ponderous, and distinctly bovine of feature.

The whole system of whaling is, of course, very interesting, even though unpleasant to those not accustomed to it; but it differs entirely from the methods in the old days of the Dundee whalers. It was then counted an exciting, dangerous calling, and to hunt a whale, harpoon it and bring the fish alongside was about the most thrilling sport in the world. The odds seemed to be somewhat in favour of the whale, and the risks the whalemén ran were unquestionably great. Nowadays there is so little danger as to be negligible, for instead of going out for months and years in lumbering barques, hunting the cetaceans in small whale-boats, and securing them by means of hand-harpoons, untiring persistence and cold pluck, tediously flensing them in the ship's tackles and rendering down the blubber in the try-works established on the deck, fast steamers set

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forth in quest of the mighty game, and these steamers are armed with powerful little guns which project a heavy and deadly harpoon, which, fitted with a bomb that bursts when the weapon has penetrated into the whale's interior, invariably inflicts a fatal wound. No doubt this is a more merciful way of dispatching the monsters; but it savours of cold-blooded slaughter. The whale stands no chance, the whalers run no risk; whaling to-day is merely systematized butchery. And to me, steeped in the old whaling traditions, primed with the picturesque accounts of real whaling, it was subject for sadness to think of these huge and nowadays helpless creatures being preyed upon so mercilessly. Once the whale-ship has secured as many whales as can conveniently be towed—each dead whale being buoyed and marked until the tale is complete—full steam is made for port, and the catch is hauled ashore on to a sloping plane, where the blubber is rapidly and scientifically stripped from the unwieldy corpse and conveyed to the try-pots to be converted into the oil of commerce.

We spectators found it treacherous work walking on the slip, which was several inches deep in a slimy horror of blood and blubber. For a considerable distance on each side of the whaling station there is a white fringe of bleached bones washed up by the tide, sole relics of what were once huge fish; but when man, and the sharks, and the birds had all taken toll, these poor remains were all that showed the magnitude of the sea's finny spoil.

Having completed the round of the works, having breathed the oily atmosphere to our complete satisfaction, having seen the entire process of creating oil out of dead whale, we went for a short walk inland, up a slope to a small lake, turning to the left along a route where wet moss and sparse grass grew, returning by way of

## We Run into Ice

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the shore, where the going was difficult on account of the dry bones littered there. So far as I could see, the land is mainly barren. This wet moss and short tussocky grass flourish to a height of about three hundred feet above sea level, but elsewhere I saw nothing but bare scree slopes, glacier-polished rocks and snow-covered shoulders, topped by the high-soaring, white-clad peaks that never alter though centuries come and go.

Better places than South Georgia certainly exist as holiday resorts, I must say. It is administered by certain Britishers, notably a magistrate, an assistant magistrate, two Customs officers, and one policeman. Every barrel of oil exported from the island has to pay a tax, and this staff is here to see the law is enforced. It must be a lonely, monotonous life enough, I should say. These Britishers live together in a house at the entrance to Gritviken Harbour, and what they do in their leisure moments puzzles me to know.

We had a volunteer for the *Quest* here in the shape of a nigger, who spoke with a pronounced Yankee accent, and seemed anxious to enrol himself as assistant cook or something of the sort. He paddled alongside in a canvas canoe, and seemed anything but happy—which is not surprising, for South Georgia and black men somehow don't seem to mix. He had stowed away aboard an outward-bound steamer from St. Vincent, and he must have found the change trying; but as he belonged to a breed that is noteworthy for its loafing propensities he appealed to us in vain for employment. That night the Boss was in excellent spirits, and vowed our Christmas should be kept on the morrow!

## CHAPTER IX

### The Great Blow Falls

JANUARY 5th dawned in nowise different from other days. I kept the anchor watch from 3 to 4 a.m., arousing automatically without being called. Almost at once I felt a suggestion of suspense in the atmosphere; what it was I could not tell. But at 7.30 that morning Mr. Hussey came down to the wardroom with the order that all hands must muster forthwith on the poop. We dressed quietly, asking ourselves what this portended. It was a dismal morning; the South Georgian sky was weeping copiously, and we donned oilskins and water-proofs as a matter of course, and got us to the poop, where we were joined by the rest of the hands from forrard, included amongst them being Mr. Jeffrey, who had been confined to his bunk ever since we left Rio, with a torn muscle in his thigh. When the doctor saw him he was very wroth and ordered him back to his bunk again, saying that no permission had been given for such a mad action; but before this little incident ceased, Mr. Wild came to us, his face drawn and terribly downcast.

"Boys," he said, "I have terrible news for you all. Sir Ernest Shackleton died early this morning. The expedition will carry on. That's all." And then he turned to Dell, our boatswain, and said: "You'll carry on the same, Dell."

"Yes, sir," replied Dell. There was no more to be said. Whole volumes of dramatic rhetoric could not have conveyed the sad, sad truth to our hearts more



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convincingly. We did not expect this tragedy; when it came, therefore, it was staggering.

Mr. Wild left us, and we slowly dispersed to our quarters, walking quietly, hushing our voices, for we were in the presence of death; a hero had passed on. During the rest of the day we talked of nothing else, recalling his kindnesses, his interest in us all, his genial comradeship, his staunch courage and indomitable determination in the face of the most trying odds. A great man had left us, and the ship was lonely.

He had died suddenly, almost painlessly we were glad to know. To the last he retained his old courage and good cheer; then in the chilly solitudes he went hence, mourned by all as trustworthy leader, loyal shipmate and wise counsellor. After midday he was wrapped up in our silken ensign and reverently lowered into a motor-launch and taken ashore, for Mr. Wild decided that all that was mortal of one of Britain's heroes should worthily lie in the soil of the land he had served so well. That was the last I saw of the Boss.

So, wrapped in his country's flag, to which he had brought nothing but honour—the flag he loved with a genuinely passionate devotion that was not merely expressed in words but also in stirring deeds—the great British Antarctic explorer passed from amongst us. His name will live when many others are forgotten; for the men he led, who were his friends, must necessarily pass down to the generations the truth of his greatness.

They took him ashore, intending to dispatch his body to the England he loved; and we others, his followers and devoted disciples, were left behind to mourn.

By the natural law of the sea the command passed to the next senior, Commander Frank Wild, one who was prepared to carry out to the last letter the programme of the man who had conceived the expedition.

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It could not have been entrusted to a worthier substitute. Commander Wild was engaged on his fifth Antarctic expedition; he knew intimately every phase of the work involved, and there is no question that had both hemispheres been fine-combed, a better man could not have been selected.

Cæsar died, another Cæsar reigned in his stead; but it took some time for our minds to adapt themselves to the altered order of things, and for many days life was hazy, fogged and unreal. For it needs the narrow environment of a small ship, I think, to enable one to understand what death can really mean. In a shore community, with many outside interests, the loss of even a great man is merely a matter for temporary regret; but aboard ship when one goes hence his loss is grievously felt: familiar echoes cease, the impact of the dead man's personality seems to vanish entirely and leave the vessel without its soul.

It was not immediately possible to convey the sad tidings to the outer civilized world. South Georgia is not in telegraphic touch with England, or, indeed, any country, and our wireless was so limited in its scope that it was hopeless for us to expect to transmit the message of Shackleton's death. Thus, lacking all knowledge of Lady Shackleton's desire, Commander Wild decided to send the body of our leader to England; and ashore there in the little hospital the mortal remains were prepared for the final journey. Mr. Hussey was delegated to form the escort; he was one of the most competent members of the staff, and his loss to the expedition would be irreparable, but a good man deserves good companionship on his progress to the tomb, and Commander Wild considered Mr. Hussey best qualified for the sad duty. Right sorry we were to lose him; right sorry was he to go, for he was the life and soul of the party; always provided with a quip and a jest to

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ease off the foulest conditions, and his laughter made even the worst days seem shot through with sudden sunbursts.

There was a steamer named the *Professor Gruvel* lying in the harbour. As she was due to clear for Monte Video in about ten days' time, her captain was prevailed upon to convey the coffin thus far, where it could be transhipped for home. It subsequently transpired, however, that Lady Shackleton preferred that our leader's grave should be dug in such a position that it would command the Gateway to the South; but long ere he came back to the scene of one of his greatest exploits, we, his comrades, were faring southward ho! with our new leader imbued with desire to fulfil all Sir Ernest's ambitions.

## CHAPTER X

### Frank Wild Takes Command

COMMANDER WILD had a vast load of trouble upon his capable shoulders. The most serious, most dangerous part of the voyage was to be faced, and the troubles that had dogged us throughout promised to continue in latitudes where ports of refuge were unknown. However, since the spirit of the genuine adventurer was his, he showed a bold face to the hazards, and we who followed whither he led saw scant outward evidence of his perturbation. All he said was that the trip promised to be a somewhat risky one, but that it was up to us to keep the Boss's memory green by means of uncomplaining devotion to duty, and a determination to see the matter through. He gave us the opportunity of withdrawing, if we so desired; but never a faint-heart asked for a passage home. It may be that national pride was involved, for it would naturally have meant a great humiliation to betray, before the Norwegian element there in South Georgia, a lack of desire to continue; or it may be, as I prefer to think, that all hands were so imbued with the idea of fulfilling Sir Ernest's dreams that at any cost they were prepared to continue, whatever the days might bring.

The day of the Boss's departure ashore was wet and depressing, and on the following day even the *Quest* appeared to be restless and unsettled, for she dragged her anchors, and it was necessary to work her to a more secure holding-ground. The general run of things down there in South Georgia is for constant heavy squalls to blow fiercely off the land, and to lie there at

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anchor with any sense of security you must have implicit faith in your ground-tackle and be constantly on the *qui vive*. The least carelessness is liable to result in your ship being driven ashore and hopelessly lost. We came to safer moorings, and, since our time was short and nothing was to be gained by protracted mourning, we set to work to ready the *Quest* for the coming hazards. Three Argentine Germans were employed to set up the rigging, overhaul all lanyards and seizings, and, driven assiduously by Jimmy Dell, our boatswain, they made excellent headway. For myself, I endeavoured to forget my natural grief in downright hard work of an unpoetical kind—attending to my below-decks duties for all I was worth. I found the panacea effective enough. But even so one missed the Boss's quiet words of encouragement and his approval of duty done to his liking; it needed a firm grip on one's resolution to prevent one from wondering what the ultimate issue of the venture might be.

There followed now a sequence of wet, depressing days—miserable days, quite in harmony with our feelings. Pack ice drifted into the harbour where we lay, and gradually solidified about the ship; the mists drooped heavily over the hills, narrowing our horizons, and throughout this time a thin, infinitely penetrating rain fell, which was not permitted to interfere with our deck duties. My immediate duty was a simple one: the rigging was being thoroughly served, and I passed the spunyarn ball whilst other men, more competent than I, did the actual work. If I thought that I was like the Hibernian who carried bricks up a ladder whilst another man expended himself in tiresome toil, that is my own affair.

High winds accompanied the misty rains, and the surrounding ice lowered the temperature enormously. All hands were busy as could be; such as were not

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employed on deck found plenty to do down below. The boiler was due for its periodical scaling, the encrustations formed inside the plates by reason of the corroding salts in the water had to be removed, as their presence lessened our steaming powers. On one of these indeterminate days, as I think I might call them, Mr. Wilkins returned in a whaler after three weeks' scientific work on the island; and on the day following his return to the *Quest* I was up at an early hour to accompany him in the small whaler *Carl* to bring back Mr. Douglas, who had established a research camp on the shore of a tiny bay some two hours' journey away. It was necessary for Wilkins and myself to serve as crew aboard the *Carl*, since the only other people aboard were the skipper and a man who called himself the engineer. Fortified by strong coffee and noble sandwiches, we set off in good spirits, despite the considerable breeze that was blowing. Although the wind blew a whole gale, the sea, thanks to the shelter of the many islets and the greater shelter of the towering hills, was smooth enough to rejoice the heart of even the most timorous tripper. My experience as helmsman of the *Quest* naturally fitted me—in my own estimation—as qualified quartermaster for any ship afloat; so I took the whaler's wheel without the smallest trepidation. Ships differ, however; they say they are like women in this respect. I wasn't used to a craft that literally leaped to answer the slightest touch on the helm, and as a result I very nearly ran the *Carl* ashore on the rocks; but our miss was as good as a mile, and once I'd got the hang of things I managed better.

Without further mishap we reached Douglas's little cove and dropped anchor there. Not without difficulty, since a sea of kelp lay between us and the shore. Wilkins and myself lowered the whaler's boat and pulled ashore, where Douglas came out to lend us a hand in beaching the boat. Having collected him and

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his much gear, we transhipped the lot to the *Carl*, and, lifting anchor, headed back for Gritviken, which we reached without startling adventure by early afternoon. In our absence the boiler had been scaled, refilled with fresh water, and our small dynamo had also been repaired.

Next day we made an early start by heaving up anchor at 6 a.m. in order to go alongside to secure an adequate supply of fresh water. By contrast with previous days this January morning was bright, mild and sunny. I came to the conclusion that the South Georgian climate had taken our own unmistakable British climate as a model. It gave us a thoroughly good imitation of an English June, I must say—frost-bite one day, sunstroke the next, with a sort of *olla podrida* of all sorts of changes, from crisp frost to sultry heat, in between. Mr. Wilkins and Major Carr vanished on another mysterious expedition in the *Carl*, and as at three o'clock our fresh-water tanks were filled, we shifted ship to the opposite side of the bay, and an adventurous party promptly proceeded ashore in search of deer. Commander Wild succeeded in bringing one down at long range; but—alas for our hopes of fresh venison!—an impassable river intervened between killer and killed, and, as time did not permit the lengthy detour necessary, the hunters returned more or less empty-handed, for sea-birds and seals hardly count.

Commander Wild's intention was to enter the Antarctic ice without any delay, by reason of the lateness of the season. Pushing to the eastward, and then striking south through the pack ice, he wished to reach the Great Ice Barrier, and, having reached it, to turn westward and comprehensively map out the whole coastline in the direction of Coats Land, so long as the ice remained loose enough to permit of an escape before the winter frosts solidified the whole mass. But as the

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*Quest's* engine power and general structure made her ability to deal with the ice something of a matter for conjecture, the plan was subject to modifications. There was to be no sensational dash to the South Pole; no attempt to outrival previous explorers' daring; the main idea of the expedition was purely scientific, with an underrunning desire to verify certain theories of the past that had never been definitely proved.

As the season was fast advancing, Commander Wild was most anxious, consequent on our annoying delays, to get clear of South Georgia and away southwards; and his haste was understandable when, the day after watering the ship and moving into Leith Harbour, we wakened to discover the surface of the bay covered with pancake ice. It is called by this name because, instead of being one broad, continuous sheet, it appears in a great number of large round pieces, ridiculously like pancakes, which, as the temperature falls, freeze solidly together to form a single sheet of what is known by Arctic and Antarctic experts as "young ice."

There was still much to be done: fresh clothing to be secured, fresh stores and coal to be embarked. We of the crew were all fitted out snugly with fur-lined leather caps, like those worn by flying men, socks and mitts beyond the counting, stout ankle boots, much warm under-clothing, pea-jackets of weather-resisting quality, wind-proof jackets—very necessary, these, considering what awaited us—stout pants, blankets and warm coverlets. Every man's wants were supplied through the generous kindness of Mr. Hansen, the manager of the whaling station at Leith; no trouble seemed too great so far as he was concerned. The old-timers said that this outfit, which seemed amazing to me, was nothing to the genuine Antarctic equipment which was waiting for us at Cape Town, having been sent there by Sir Ernest Shackleton before the expedition started; but it promised



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to suffice us for one season, at all events. Mr. Hansen also fashioned for us in his workshops ice anchors, hand harpoons, ice picks and ice axes; and I must give the Norwegian population of South Georgia full marks for the unvarying interest they showed in our preparations and the ready help they gave under all circumstances.

After a morning's "Peggying," i.e. performing the general charwoman's duties of the ship, I went ashore with the cook in the surf-boat for a load of fish and bread, and when we started off found some difficulty in making headway. Our combined knowledge of handling small boats was remarkable for its minuteness; the surf-boat spun about in giddy circles, but the little cherub sitting up aloft had an eye open, and we reached the *Quest* in a manner that would have resulted in our scalps being served up on the wardroom table had we been pukka man-o'-war-men, where style counts as well as results.

But even so, breathless as this adventure was, it was better than "Peggying"! Some day I shall write a whole book about the Peggying art; but space forbids a lengthy diatribe here.

After dinner that night we had guests aboard, a small party of Shetlanders favouring us with a visit. We entertained them to the best of our ability: music on the gramophone, mandolin, mouth-organ and violin; for the *Quest* was a musical ship in intention, whatever the result might be in performance.

Gradually now we became equipped for our venture. The ship was coaled, supplied with oil, her store-lockers were packed to bursting; the friendly Shetlanders cut our hair! But, prior to setting forth, one day was devoted to a shore excursion. Such as wished to study the whole art of whale-flensing were at liberty so to do, for a ninety-foot whale was being cut up on the slips; such as preferred to practise gymnastics had their oppor-

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tunity, too, for a blown-up whale was tethered to our mooring-buoy, and a lot of fine, confused exercise was obtainable by jumping off our rails on to the distended carcass, which had the resilient qualities of indiarubber, and coming back aboard by means of the rebound. For myself I accompanied the hunting party in the capacity of assistant to Mr. Wilkins, who was determined to secure a photographic record of the activities.

It was an interesting day for me. The first noteworthy thing that greeted us was a regular school of young sea-elephants: square-faced brutes with bulging nostrils and expressions that seemed to suggest that each one was fitted with a very pungent mustard plaster on his chest. They were lying half hidden amongst the tussock grass, through which their sleek grey bodies were not easily distinguishable. Very ferocious and awe-inspiring they showed; their grunts on our approach might merely have been grunts of inquiry, but they sounded extremely like grunts of rage. Halting, we threw small stones at them, after the fashion of inquiring humanity, which caused them to rear angrily upright on their hinder parts, snarl with wide-open mouths at us, then, curving their backs in high disdain, they moved off towards the water, their heads over their sleek shoulders, grunting—always grunting. Sea-elephants really are one of the many tribes of seals, and they get their particular name from the fact that the young bulls are equipped with short trunks which give them a most ludicrous appearance. They are the largest of all the seals, and some of them weigh up to four or five tons apiece. Relying on the gallantry of the bulls, the cow seals cluster together in "harems," so-called, of perhaps fifty strong; but their faith in their male protectors seems doomed to disappointment, judging by the behaviour of the young bull seals we disturbed.

The shooting-party went on their way, and I followed

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up the hill in company with Wilkins, who was constantly securing some fresh snap of interest. We stumbled across a great number of giant petrels, sitting complacently with their young. So intent were they on their nursery duties—it must either have been that or else an utter absence of fear of man—that they refused to move an inch as we neared them, contenting themselves with ear-piercing squawks and snappings of their long bills. Wilkins in his turn did some snapping, too, securing very excellent pictures of these interesting birds at close range. The daring hunters meanwhile trudged after problematical deer, and found none alive, but discovered the carcass of the one previously shot; and for obvious reasons decided to leave it where it was.

Thoroughly fatigued by the unaccustomed exercise we returned to the ship, and took her across the bay to Gritviken, where anchor was dropped for the night. A short night enough it proved, for at 4 a.m. all hands were called, to hoist and stow the surf-boat and get the *Quest* under way. Having got our anchors the engines were started, and away we went, coasting along the forbidding shore, with the Kelvin sounder going briskly, in order that existing charts might be verified or corrected as to the varying depths of the water. It is a great invention, this Kelvin sounder, and perfectly accurate soundings can be taken to a depth of 300 fathoms or more whilst the ship is going ahead at full speed. The Kelvin is a very great improvement on the old sounding methods, when it was necessary to heave the ship to, carry the lead forward, drop it, wait until the leadline paid out, and then haul it in astern by hand; even then not knowing whether your measurements were accurate to a fathom or two either way.

The Kelvin sounder, which owes its genesis to Lord Kelvin, is in reality a simple affair; it depends for its accuracy on atmospheric pressure. It consists of a

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sinker—merely a weighty chunk of shaped lead—and a tube in which is slid a narrow glass tube coated internally with a chemical substance, which the pressure alters in colouring. The sinker is attached to tough wire capable of standing a terrific strain, and this wire is wound about a drum worked by friction clutches and friction brakes. When the sinker reaches bottom a slight pressure on the winding handle checks the run of the wire, a little added pressure puts the handles in action, and two men can comfortably wind up the lead from the greatest depth. Once the sounding-tube is brought aboard the glass tube is applied to a graduated gauge, and the limit of the changed colouring of the contained pigment marks the actual depth of water. The bottom of the sinker is hollowed slightly and “armed” with tallow, which, impinging on the bottom, either brings up a sample of sand, gravel or shell, or, if hard rock alone is below, brings up an imprint which sufficiently shows the nature of the bottom. The depth-reading, being measured purely by vertical atmospheric pressure, is necessarily accurate, no matter how fast the ship is going or how much wire has run out.

Presently we stopped, lowered the surf-boat and dispatched a crew ashore to bring off Douglas and Carr, and, if possible, secure some penguins for food, as our preserved stores required the most careful shepherding, by reason of the lengthy cruise ahead of us. The doctor and I, on landing, took sticks and proceeded up the hill as if for a wager. The penguin can waddle along at a considerable pace on level ground; but up a gradient he is clumsy and handicapped, and a man can beat him easily. We were out for food, not sport, so we didn't believe in giving Master Penguin too many chances. In a very little while we killed as many as were necessary for the larder, and this without undue exertion, for the quaint fellows literally swarmed. We

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collected our bag and retraced our steps, and found that Wilkins had killed two Rock Hopper penguins, these for specimens, while for the cook's benefit he had shot several Skua gulls, which make really excellent eating, being less fishy and oily than penguins and the like. Returning aboard I skinned and cleaned the birds for Green, and by the time the last stripped corpse was ready we were dropping anchor in Larsen Harbour. This is a snug little bay—very suggestive of some of the Norwegian fjords, I believe, having an extremely narrow entrance, and the land all round and about rising in precipitous crags from the placid water—sheer rock walls varying from a thousand to fifteen hundred feet in height, in general effect somewhat overwhelming. It makes an average-sized man feel more than insignificant to be brooded over by these towering walls.

Just as we anchored, a wire was discovered fouling the propeller; but the trouble was not serious, and "Old Mac" managed to set matters to rights without any great difficulty.

Because of the indifferent holding for our anchors, it was necessary for the anchor-watch to maintain a regular system of soundings, as the danger of dragging ashore was not inconsiderable.

At 5 a.m. on Wednesday, January 18th, we got our ground-tackle and steamed out between the frowning cliffs that guard the right little tight little Larsen Harbour; and I, coming on deck just before breakfast, was amazed and fascinated by the glorious beauty of the innumerable tabular icebergs in our vicinity. They shone pure white and dazzling in the glory of the sunlight, a truly wonderful spectacle, and quite enough to give one a working impression of what the Antarctic wastes really were. Furthermore, even at this early date I was able to understand what is meant by the ice-lure—the queer fascination which draws men from all the

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corners of the globe; which makes them leave home, comfort and peace for the sheer sake of waging war with the frozen wilderness.

As the skipper was anxious to secure absolutely correct bearings of Clerk Rocks, whose charted position was somewhat open to doubt, we headed that way; but the sunny conditions quickly gave way to thick mist, and so we missed the rocks completely, which was a pity, as it had been reported that recent volcanic eruptions had taken place there, and the sight of an active volcano amongst drifting ice would have been something worth seeing. Still, there was no time to waste in hunting the rocks, for we were now embarked on the really difficult part of our enterprise—the beating of the icy fastnesses of the South. Every day, almost every hour, indeed, was of supreme value.

## CHAPTER XI

### All Ice Where Eye Could See

EVERY one of us was, I think, eager to join issue with the frozen enemy. The desire to conquer must always remain a dominant instinct in men's souls, whether the object of conquest be human or merely geographical. You feel that life isn't worth living unless you're fighting!

But in ice-fighting caution is a useful adjunct, and so, with the mist thickening and much ice about, speed was eased to a mere crawl, and with keen eyes on the look out we slogged placidly along. There were bergs everywhere, by the hundred, wonderfully varied in size and shape, but all speaking of the Antarctic continent that had mothered them. I knew now why our dead leader had been so enthusiastic concerning the solitudes he had made his own by right of conquest. Throughout my association with him he had rhapsodized about the call of the ice and the eager hunger with which your iceman goes forward into battle. Some of that hunger troubled me as I steered the *Quest* along her menaced route.

The next day broke bright and inspiring; the mists had fled, and everywhere was floating ice. These bergs need a volume to themselves adequately to describe, for to me it seemed as though no two were alike. Some were flat-topped, calves from the great Ice Barrier; others were fantastic in outline, like fairy islands, indeed, pierced by dull blue-green caverns through which the seas roared and thundered and hissed and

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whined. You could see what might have been frozen cathedrals, rearing inspiring spires to the untroubled blue of the sky; ice-clad ships of an older time, castles, glittering palaces, shifting, bowing, curtsying to the bidding of the sea that was drawing them north to inevitable destruction. Many of them were cluttered thickly with penguins and other sea birds, in clouds of hundreds at a time; and the high sea that was now running threw itself in angry foam far, far up the icy obstacles in a bewilderment of shifting beauty that left me near breathless.

As the weather was becoming more and more rigorous, I decided that now was the day and now the hour to discard shorts and "hard-case" clothing and rig myself out as an Antarctic adventurer. My appearance on deck, garbed in a big fur cap, heavy sea-boots and a sheath-knife capable of carving up a whale into tiny collops, created some amusement amongst the after-guard, who inclined to the opinion that I looked a thoroughgoing ruffian, because my beard was growing to pirate-like dimensions, and my entire appearance was awe-inspiring to a degree. Still, that didn't matter; and as I gathered that those who giped were really not displeased with the way I was shaping, I put the best face possible on their taunts, and decided that it was worth while being held up to derision if only for the sake of hearing laughter ring about the ship.

There had not been overmuch laughter of late, but now the spirits of all aboard were rising; and the return to duty of Jeffrey, who had been *hors-de-combat* ever since we left Rio, was a further matter for rejoicing.

About four o'clock in the afternoon of January 20 we reached the island of Zavodovski, the most northerly of the South Sandwich group. Just before sighting this outlier we saw several big bergs drawn up with almost military precision in line. Zavodovski is a low



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volcanic island, with a black basaltic coast, steep-to, but insignificant in height; nowhere do these miniature cliffs rise to a greater altitude than ten feet. Only the cliffs themselves are visible; the rest of the land is ice-covered. It rises by easy slopes to a peak that, when we saw it, was veiled in mist, so that the exact height could not be measured; but it was estimated from the contours that the maximum altitude was round about nine hundred feet. Forlorn and desolate enough the island looked, distinguishable from the neighbouring bergs only by reason of this pitiless black fringe of rock, populated by countless legions of penguins, who congregate in rookeries that stretch for a mile at a time. The tabular bergs about are literally black with these birds, and the water in a constant boil by reason of their diving and bobbing. Passing near-hand to one of these bird-covered bergs, Mr. Jeffrey let off a rocket, which exploded with a thunderous detonation. Did the penguins take alarm? Not a bit of it! They merely looked up, for all the world like deaf old men who imagined they might have heard a distant clap of thunder.

A second rocket was fired, and, precisely like a sour-tempered old man leaving a group with whom he had quarrelled, one solitary penguin waddled to the edge and slid off. Before the splash of his departure fairly showed, the remainder, uncountable hundreds of them, like so many sheep rose and followed his example. It was the funniest sight I have ever seen. The numbers were so vast, and the hurry was so great—those behind crying "Forward!" and, presumably, those in front crying "Back!"—that the rearguard pushed the advance guard willy-nilly over the edge in a black and white cascade. A regular avalanche of penguindom poured over into the sea; the foremost, protesting strongly against the unceremonious treatment they were

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receiving, endeavoured to hold stubbornly to their ground; but it was no good; weight of numbers told, and very shortly the berg was clear and the water in a boil by reason of the diving, swimming, indignant birds.

It is quite on the cards that a certain amount of volcanic activity still exists amongst these South Sandwich Islands, for we clearly discerned what might easily have been sulphur fumes rising from the rocks near the water's edge. Soundings were taken about the island, and having secured all the scientific data necessary, we sheered off.

Shortly after midnight the *Quest* had a narrow squeak. It came about in this wise, and it is worth describing as showing the countless risks that await the vessel navigating amongst floating ice. Although dark, there was still sufficient light to see two large bergs ahead, one on either bow, with a perfectly clear stretch of water between them. To make a detour seemed altogether unnecessary, and the *Quest's* bow was accordingly notched on a course that should take her clear through the open space. Suddenly Commander Wild, who was on watch, realized that the ship was heading straight as a die for the middle of another gigantic berg. It was a moment for instant action; there was no time for hesitation. On a full helm the *Quest* swung sharply round and cleared the first of the bergs, though with little enough space to spare. But for seamanlike promptitude she might easily have lost her number and gone to join the long roll of the lost in the Port of Missing Ships. What had actually happened was that Commander Wild had mistaken a great cave bored deeply into the flank of a giant berg for open water! It was a narrow squeak enough, and, realizing it, it became more possible to put faith in Clark Russell's remarkable story of the Frozen Pirate. That great berg



The *Quest* Narrowly Escapes an Iceberg.



The Midnight Sun in the Land of Ice.



Finding the Magnetic Dip: Jeffrey and Douglas at work.



Taking the First Sounding in the Frozen South.

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could have taken our little ship and tucked her away in a crevice and never noticed its tenant!

A very considerable sea was running down here, and the *Quest* set up a lively motion, rolling with the purposeful thoroughness she had always displayed. Next night we had another narrow shave of colliding with a deceptive berg. As we progressed we got case-hardened to these risks, and the ship's work went on much as usual. Whether you're under the Line or nearing the Pole, your work must be done; the ship must be cleaned and kept in weatherly condition, for she is your only home, your safeguard against death. The most scrupulous cleanliness goes as a matter of course, for dirt breeds disease, and in a small, tightly packed community like ours anything in the nature of an epidemic might have truly appalling consequences. Snow fell for a while during this Sunday, and though the wind was not high the restlessness of the sea was very marked, and the *Quest* was as lively as a ball on a piece of elastic. That more nearly describes her movements than anything else I can think of. Ice was everywhere, and big combers where the ice was not. But beyond the ordinary routine of eating, working and sleeping I find there is little enough of interest to narrate during this portion of our journeying. We ate heartily and spent practically all our leisure in sleep. It is astonishing what a great amount of sleep a man can stand down there in the Antarctic. Astonishing, too, the quantities of food he can consume! Life was just one darned meal after another, we used to say, with spasmodic interludes of work, and then deep, deep, dreamless wells of slumber.

But on January 25 we took the first really worthwhile sounding of the expedition, an event of no little importance, in which all hands could bear a share. Something like 4,550 fathoms of wire were run out—

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27,000 feet separated us from the sea's hither floor. Then—snap! the sounding wire parted, and the operation proved fruitless. It was just the luck of the game; a kink in the wire, no doubt; but that sounding was never recorded in the archives.

The ship had been leaking extensively ever since we left Rio; but now the leaks were becoming so considerable that active pumping was necessary. It is a much overrated pastime, let me say. All right enough in smooth water when the decks are dry; but when the ship is piling white water aboard with every heave she gives, when that white water, as cold as the ice itself, is tearing at your legs, drenching you, insinuating itself into your sea-boots, sweeping over your bent shoulders, as generally happened, pumping leaves much to be desired. Still, we couldn't have the old hooker settling down beneath us, and what Kipling calls "the ties of common funk" helped us to endure the rigours and make the best of what was a bad job amongst many bad jobs.

One day's fine weather rewarded us. We mopped up the worst of the wet, endeavoured to dry saturated gear, flattered ourselves that good times were coming, and then—promptly ran again into vile conditions. But during the spell of fair weather another deep sounding was attempted. Since the general opinion aboard was that the reason for our initial failure was the too eager willingness of all hands to take a share in the operation, this occasion was marked by the astonishing lack of helpers, Watts and Jimmy Dell alone officiating. Nevertheless the luck was out: 480 fathoms of wire were lost, and with it the sinker and the snapper. All in the day's work, of course, but disappointing enough to make some whisper, "*Quest* luck again!" The best of good fortune was most certainly not accompanying us on this expedition!

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There were whispers that a ship's magazine was to be started—Naisbitt was to be responsible for it. We welcomed its advent, and hoped that some bright brain might dig up some new joke from its depths and favour the company with it. The old stories had been told and retold, and we were pining for some new jest. In *Expedition Topics* we got lots of humour—all of it at our own expense! Our pet weaknesses were enlarged upon, our chiefest foibles exploited in the sacred name of literature; and without a doubt the mirror was held up to nature with a vengeance. There were secret meetings a many—low-voiced conversations held in obscure corners, and all of them had the same objective: the blood of the editor! But we laughed, and laughter is the finest antidote known to boredom. So after our natural passions had subsided, we accorded Naisbitt a cordial vote of thanks.

On January 30 what might have proved a tragedy happened. Commander Wild, who seemed to prepare for every possible emergency well in advance, gave orders for the provisions of the various boats to be rearranged. This was done; all our sea-boats were made ready to take the water for thirty days at a stretch in the event of the *Quest* being nipped between two bergs and sinking; but as the surf boat was likely to be in constant use, and as the stored provisions in her were in the way, these stores were shifted and equally divided between the two lifeboats. Then, in order to give more room on our hampered decks, it was decided to swing out the port lifeboat, and by an arrangement of spars and fenders, keep her swung out. All hands were accordingly mustered for the task, for as the ship was rolling heavily to a big beam swell, all hands promised to be necessary. We manned the davit tackles and hauled the heavy boat clear of her chocks, swung her outboard in the davits, and then—the big roll came.

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She came back with a rush, as though determined to crush us to fragments, for between us and the funnel was very little space. Those who dodged nearly fell down the engine-room hatches. But Captain Worsley didn't dodge in time. He was always the head and front of this sort of offending; delicate work invariably found him eager and willing. The heavy boat's prow jammed him between itself and the wheel-house, and the timber of the structure surrendered at discretion. There was a cry, the splintering of wood, the awful snapping of human bones, and Worsley's ribs gave to the impact of the weighty craft. But for the smashing of the wheel-house he must inevitably have been killed outright, so there's something to be said in favour of defective construction! Commander Wild, who was inside the boat, and having an exceedingly thin time of it, called to McIlroy to tend the injured officer, who was promptly carried to his cabin, where it was found that the damage, though alarmingly serious, was not necessarily fatal.

Meantime the boat was swinging wildly to the uneasy movements of the sea, and Mr. Jeffrey, with language to correspond, shouted to us to hold on to her; but this was easier said than done, for the boat, heavy enough when empty, now carried something like a quarter of a ton of stores in addition to her normal equipment. For a time she seemed to be filled with angry life; she was like a mad bull, determined to destroy. So there we were, grappling the runaway boat, bracing ourselves determinedly, our teeth set and the skin flying off our hands in square inches, so it seemed, and we could do nothing to quieten her. No doubt she would have banged herself to wreckage against some of the ship's top-hamper, but Commander Wild, with the presence of mind of your proper sailor, suddenly saw a chance, and as the boat swung inboard, cut the rack-



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ings that held the lifeboat suspended, and she dropped with a thud into her chocks. Working like ferrets, we clapped on the gripes, bolted the chocks into position and mastered her, telling her meantime in round, deep-sea phrases what we thought of her. She'd nearly won, though; it was only the lightning-like skill of the commander that gave us the victory. As the *Quest* seemed to take rather a delight in the scrimmage, throwing herself about all this time gleefully, like a bad boy who has been chidden for some wrong-doing, it was decided to let the boat stay out; and since we were all handy, another deep sounding was taken; but once more the wire parted at the critical moment. But forty fathoms remained to be wound in, when—snap! More wasted effort! Some seventy-eight years before the *Quest* passed over that particular spot an officer of the *Pagoda* had logged the existence of a rock there, and it was our intention to prove the worth of his record; but as we got a depth of close on three thousand fathoms where the rock—named the Pagoda Rock—was supposed to be, we decided that even if there, it was deep enough to be out of the way of such scanty shipping as crossed over it. But when we satisfied ourselves that the older navigator was in error, we almost called ourselves mistaken, for a big blue berg was sighted four points on the port bow, and in appearance it was so much like a rock that we must needs alter course and trudge right up to it before we were satisfied that it was merely ice. An old capsized berg it was, hence our mistake. The day was fine and sunny, and although there was a long oily swell running, which accounted for our drastic rolling, there was no sea as “sea” is understood by shipmen.

Under canvas, when any wind worth mentioning blew, and consequently blessedly steady, we proceeded on our unexciting way. I managed to get in a bit of

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reading in intervals of work. Mason's "Four Feathers" proved uncommonly interesting and exciting; and we all of us had a look at our new newspaper, which exceeded the wildest expectations, as I said. Apart from the biting personalities, *Expedition Topics* contained some very clever drawings, and gave us something to think about outside ourselves. To harp on such a comparative trifle may seem waste of time; but it is the trifles that count when folk are situated as we were situated. I have heard that aboard certain small ships in lonely waters a sort of green mould settles down on the crews, silly trifles are exaggerated and magnified into enormous proportions, and bitter enmities are aroused simply through the unvarying monotony. The *Quest* didn't come into this category in any way, but we caught at any happening that promised the faintest interest, for only those who have experienced this sensation of being entirely clipped off from the outer world, that might easily shift its moorings and vanish into thin air in our absence, this brooding loneliness, can understand what possibilities such isolation can possess for enlarging the worst traits of humanity.

Daily our lifeboats were overhauled, examined, and their stores tallied, to see that everything was in perfect order in case of emergency. A lifeboat mayn't be necessary for ninety-nine years, eleven months and twenty-nine days out of a century, but when you do want it you want it in a hurry, and with a ship settling under your feet there isn't always time enough to add a new coat of paint or mend a broken oar!

The first day of February brought us a freshening breeze and a consequent increase in speed. Under a press of canvas we made rousing headway, which was invigorating, for the sense of even motion is delightful. To one standing on the bridge, listening to the hoosh-hoosh and lap-lap and gurgle of broken water as it

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streams away to leeward, it appears as though the ship were storming along at a twenty-knot clip; for when the *Quest* did move she made as much fuss about the job as a battleship. I used to delude myself with the idea that I was on the spray-washed bridge of a destroyer hurtling through the seas at the speed of an express train; and imagination helped in the self-deception, though the best the old packet could do, with a strong favouring wind behind her, was about seven knots and an onion. Still, what does it matter if you *feel* you are doing thirty? It is a great joy to feel a sailing ship thrilling with life beneath your feet, to listen to the even drumming of the reef-points on the distended canvas, the harping of the wind through the tautened rigging and the whole glad chorus of striving.

As time went on we got all the storm-music we needed; for this breeze shifted to a point forrard of the beam, unfortunately, which necessitated our taking in the square sail. Here's where the "unfortunately" comes in. We of the middle watch must needs add our aid to housing the sail and setting the somewhat unwieldy foresail in its stead, and it was so refractory that it kept us out of our bunks till long after we should have been relieved. But with the wind freshening to a good half-gale, bunks looked very inviting, and none the less so because we had been deprived of their cosy welcome for certain precious minutes. You can take a very tolerant view of heavy weather from the shelter of your blankets; I found! But the gale increased by leaps and bounds, and in a very short time the *Quest* was at her old game. Every one of those nautical exercises in which she had become so proficient were indulged in with admirable gusto; we pitched, rolled, spun and lurched as though qualifying for a prize as the most restless ship on deep water. Big seas rolled aboard in monotonous succession; high sprays lashed

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over us, and the grey, clammy griminess of hard weather claimed us for its own.

It struck me during the beginning of this blow that it would be almost better to have one long unbroken succession of snorters, without any of those tantalizing intervals of fine weather, because in a little while you acquire a habit of balancing yourself under the most drastic conditions; but one day of a steady keel gets you out of practice, and so the lesson needs to be learnt all over again every fresh storm that comes your way. Fortunately our giddy evolutions did injured Worsley no harm; he took advantage of the gale to report that he was feeling much better, though how broken ribs and crushed muscles could benefit by such movements puzzled me infinitely.

During the night the storm grew in force, and Commander Wild was reluctantly compelled once more to heave to. His disappointment was keen, for he was so anxious to make every mile he possibly could to the east; but you can't drive a ship with weak engines dead in the teeth of a snorter, and the only thing to do is to resign yourself to adverse circumstances and wait for better times to come along when the fates are more propitious. Smothered in crashing water, washed off our feet, clinging breathlessly to everything that afforded a handhold, waist deep when we were not over our shoulders, we handed the foresail—an ugly sail to tackle in a breeze—and got the *Quest* laid to under her staysail alone. Then the ship friskily beat all her previous bests. She pitched things about that you'd think an earthquake couldn't have started. She lifted wedged books out of their shelves and flung them to the floor amongst dirty swilling water; she turned the galley into an imitation slap-stick comedy; and Green, trying to retrieve his belongings—now plunging gallantly into Gubbins Alley after a soup-kettle, now

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flying across the galley to collect a kettle—used language that would certainly have shocked our troops in Flanders.

That we should not be bored to death through inaction, the *Quest* leaked handsomely, and the daily spells at the pumps were increased, all hands taking spell about at the labour, which has very little to recommend it as a pastime. Query, the dog, made an indifferent showing in this rough weather; he seemed unable to acquire the good sea-legs necessary in a ship of our dimensions, and as every fresh lurch of the ship flung him helplessly to leeward, we had to chock him off in the wardroom with coats and blankets and anything that would serve as padding, in order that the poor brute might sleep in peace.

At the wheel that evening I stared wishfully to windward, hoping to see some sign of the storm abating; but there was nothing save an ominous grey-black horror of drooping cloud, and a waste of black-grey water, whipped to foamy spite between the narrowed horizons. Majestic enough in very truth, awe-inspiring, indeed, but far from promising; the sort of outlook that made you grit your teeth together and swear you *wouldn't* be dismayed, although every thinking bit of you felt that it ought to be.

Nevertheless, black as were the portents, four o'clock in the morning brought an easing up of the conditions, and by noon we were steadily under way with fore and aft canvas set to a breeze that was not at all terrifying. By contrast with the past days it was like being on an inland lake; the steadiness of the ship seemed unnatural; you were always reaching out for the old familiar grip of something substantial, in readiness for the inevitable lurch; but when it was discovered that it was possible once more to serve a meal as it should be served—in the dishes instead of the eaters'

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laps or down their necks, it was soon possible to grow familiarized with the better times. Peggying in real hard weather is no joke, let me assure you. As often as not you find the entire meal lying to leeward, a hideous blend of tea, milk, bacon fat and jam, together with a few spoons and forks and broken fragments of crockery thrown in. Sometimes, also, you discover a stray breakfaster, resigned to the state of affairs, eating off the floor, as being the lowest depth to which he could descend.

## CHAPTER XII

### The Great Struggle Begins

WE were now moving over a sea that was empty of bergs completely; the floating outliers of the Great Barrier had gone north on their summer journey; but at 10.30 a.m. on February 4, the sea then being calm and a thin mist hanging over the horizon, a few small pieces of ice were sighted ahead. Was this at last the pack-ice of which I had heard so much from the old-timers? Yes; the mist lifted, and there, unmistakably, were long white belts of ice fragments—stream-ice, as it is called, the heralds of the heavier pack not far off. The *Quest* entered loose pack at about noon, in latitude  $65^{\circ} 7'$  south, longitude  $15^{\circ} 21'$  east, and now it was necessary to take in all sail, because the courses to be steered in order to avoid the heavier fragments of ice were most erratic, and as often as not the ship was thrown wholly aback as she turned and twisted along the narrowing channels.

Everyone was now in the highest of spirits. To enter the pack was the goal we had set ourselves—one of the goals, at least; and we were entered. Moreover, the ice had lessened the sea greatly; we were moving along on an even keel; the wind had dropped almost to nothing; and, too, so far as the veterans were concerned, this was to all intents and purposes a home-coming. Especially noticeable was this delight in old Macleod, an iceman to his finger-tips. He paraded up and down the main deck ceaselessly, with his face wearing as beatific a smile as ever human countenance carried, I warrant; so that to me, an amateur, it was

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as though he himself had placed the ice there for the general entertainment. Undoubtedly his mind was soaring to unimaginable heights; his eyes shone, uplift radiated from him—until he slipped on some loose ice on the planking and came sprawling somewhat ludicrously down to the deck and the realities of existence.

At two o'clock I took my trick at the wheel, and enjoyed two hours of genuinely strenuous exercise. Dodging ice is a most fascinating sport. Ordinarily a trick at the wheel is a dreary and eventless matter enough, except when hard weather is running, but in the pack the helmsman hasn't a moment for cogitating on his woes, for the officer of the watch, eagle-eyed and vigilant as they make them, is everlastingly yelling: "Hard a-port; hard a-starboard! Give it to her quickly—quickly! Hard over with her!" and so on, and the muscles must follow the bidding of the brain simultaneously with the order being received. It is very good exercise for the arms and chest, far more invigorating than frowsting over a stove or snuggling down into blankets for warmth; and as you realize how dependent the ship is for continued safety on your activity, you take a keen pride in almost anticipating the orders, waiting for the next one with all the eagerness of a terrier alert for a stick to be thrown.

The pack thickened as the day went by; the open lanes of water between the congealed masses grew fewer and fewer. One or two seals, lying prone on the ice-floes, lifted their heads and looked at us with astonishment and supercilious disdain as we ploughed forward, but betrayed otherwise no symptom of alarm. Over all was the solemn mysterious stillness of the frozen wastes, broken only by the crunching of the young ice our sheathed bow parted on its determined progress. And somehow the nearness of the ice bred



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up a queer kind of exhilaration; it created a sort of "do or die" feeling that is not easily expressed in words. I fancy, though, judging by what the veterans said, that it was very much the same effect as is produced on old soldiers who smell powder—it recalls past victories and gives promise of further achievement. These mysteries are beyond my ken; I can only speak of what I experienced, and I know that my first day amongst the ice left me tingling all over.

Even Query seemed to get a dose of the prevalent feeling; he could not keep still for long at a time, but kept jumping to the bulwarks, where, with forefeet propped, he stared out over the pack, his nostrils distending, giving a curious whine every now and then, as though he, too, wanted to join issue with the vast power that we were opposing. Every now and then, too, in the open stretches of water, we sighted whales—killer whales, as they are called—who occasionally, in search of air, charged wildly upwards to break the newly formed ice with their heads; it gave me quite a shock to see broken ice flying upwards in a cloud, with water and spray mixed amongst it, and then, below the flurry, to detect the heads and piggish little eyes of the whales themselves, like weird denizens of the hither deeps who had appeared to protest against our violation of their sanctuary.

During the morning watch of Sunday, February 5, I was kept at the wheel for nearly the whole of the four-hour watch, as Mac, who usually shared the duty with me, was otherwise employed in Peggying duties; and, because of the vigorous exercise, I was quite ready for a rest when eight bells sounded my release. As the wind was now favourable, and as every added inch of headway counted, we set the topsail to assist our hard-striving engines. After lunch we passed a very large floe, on which, entirely indifferent to our approach,

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three seals were basking lazily, and Commander Wild, who, like a careful leader, realized that the success of the expedition depended on the health of its members, decided that now was the hour to replenish our larder. Consequently he shot all three of them, and their carcasses were hoisted aboard by means of the yardarm tackle of the squaresail. Certain of the old-timers at once set to work with vast enthusiasm, and in three short minutes the quarry was flayed, the tidbits obtained from the general bulk—brains, kidneys, liver, the heart and the back steaks dissected from each seal, and the refuse thrown overboard. The skins, with their two and a half inch thickness of blubber adhering, I helped to cut up and convey to the bunkers, in readiness for use as fuel for the boiler fires, since every unit of heat producing material was now of extreme value.

This was my first experience of the gentle art of butchering. An unlovely job, entirely lacking in romance, but very necessary, and so not to be growled at.

During this Sunday the pack hourly grew thicker and the weather became colder, but not unpleasantly so, and I found this crisp cold much easier to bear than the wet, soggy cold of the lower latitudes. Altogether the day was very pleasant, for the sun was shining throughout and the sky quite clear of cloud. Daylight, too, lasted all the twenty-four hours, even though the sun did disappear for a little while. But I was getting hardened to the lack of night by this time, just as I was getting hardened to all the other peculiar features of exploring the vicinity of a Pole.

Coming on deck at four o'clock on the following morning, I discovered the ship hemmed in with close pack-ice of a heavy kind. There were very few visible areas of open water, but the lanes amongst the ice had disappeared. It was still possible to make headway, and the *Quest* pushed slowly on, with a suggestion of

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purposeful striving about her that was very good to see. It was as though she said: "In spite of all disadvantages, and no matter what sort of bad luck I've had in the past, I'm going through with the job now that I've started!"

Though from the deck it was impossible to see any open lanes, from the crow's nest it was different, and by dint of stationing a keen-eyed lookout in that breezy eminence, who shouted out whenever an open stretch of water showed, and indicated to those on the bridge in which direction to steer, steady progress continued. The noteworthy feature was the appearance of many more killer whales, who welcomed us by breaking through the young ice with their backs, and as soon as they reached open air, blowing with a very unpleasant noise and then, as though playing a game of surprises, whisking from sight like lightning. Ugly brutes they were; seafaring nightmares is the best way of describing them. Having reached latitude  $67^{\circ} 8'$  south, we expected to get a sight of land at any time.

It was very astonishing to take the first trick of the middle watch in broad daylight; but the lack of darkness was a godsend, as it enabled us to pick our way in amongst the floes and so keep going steadily. The sun was not above the horizon, but the light was quite as clear as early afternoon of a winter's day in Scotland. Of course, the dazzling white surface of the ice itself helps a lot, and the remarkable clearness of the air is another consideration when reckoning up this curious visibility.

As the day wore on the floes began to pack much more closely together, and the ice itself was increasing in thickness, so that we made only indifferent headway; and at last, coming to an unusually heavy belt of pack, we decided that it would be necessary to give up altogether. To force a way through appeared im-

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possible, but just ahead showed a clear space of water, and it was determined to make an effort to cut the frozen barrier that parted us from further progress. To get through the five hundred yards that separated the *Quest* from free water took exactly two hours of steady thrusting. For long spaces of time we would find ourselves jammed tightly between floes as high as our bulwarks, where, with engines rattling away at full speed, we failed to make an inch of headway. Then it was a case of stopping and going astern, after which the ship was stopped again, engines opened to full speed ahead, and like a ram we crunched into the solid mass and bored a little way farther towards our goal, with the broken ice grating and roaring and screaming along our sides in a crashing chorus of spite. Then, as soon as we gained a trifling expanse of open water, we were through it and up against the solidifying ice once more, when the whole process had to be repeated.

While we were held up in this way great numbers of seals floundered around us, apparently sucking at the ship's sides for food, and we thus had an exceptionally good opportunity of studying these mammals at close quarters and under natural conditions. Their movements under water, plainly visible from our rails, were surprisingly graceful and extraordinary to a degree.

After infinite striving we gained a stretch of open water, but, crossing it, we found the thickened pack on the farther side to be even worse than what we had successfully negotiated, and Commander Wild, coming on deck at four o'clock to take over the watch, went immediately to the masthead, where, by personal observation, he satisfied himself of the utter futility of attempting to proceed farther in that direction. He decided then to turn away to the eastward, in hope of discovering a lead that would carry us southward.

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Course was accordingly altered and we trudged slowly on. It was growing colder and colder; the real ice nip was in the air; but the rigour was not at all unbearable.

Later in the day five seals were shot and flayed on the ice; their fat proved a welcome addition to our bunkers, to say nothing of dainty fare for our larder. The big risk in our kind of work is scurvy, close quarters and a monotonous diet of preserved foods tending to encourage this most dreaded of all shipboard diseases, so every opportunity of feeding the crew on fresh meat was naturally taken. Like explorers in more temperate zones, we were determined to live more or less on the country. But as there were other considerations besides food, Mr. Wilkins sighted, stalked and shot one lone, lorn Emperor penguin, which he gleefully added to his growing collection.

Throughout the following morning the *Quest* continued working to north and east in search of an opening that would lead her to the south. Here the pack was looser, and not infrequently the ship was steaming quite gaily across lagoons or down wide, promising lanes, with many seals and those ugly killer whales accompanying us. Worried by reason of a possible shortage in our coal supply—all along it was admitted the *Quest* was too small for the task imposed upon her—Commander Wild stopped the engines at noon and all plain sail was made, under which, as the breeze was strong, we made excellent progress even through the pack. During the afternoon, ambling along quite pleasantly, we passed the first sea-leopard I had ever seen. It was basking on a floe and seemed quite unconcerned at our appearance in its native solitudes.

Watching as the *Quest* edged her way through the pack under sail alone was quite an interesting experience. She managed quite well, and seemed to lean all her weight on the ice when it hampered her, thrust-

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ing forward in a purposeful fashion; and it was quite possible to realize why earlier Polar explorers had done so well before the era of steam. But during the first watch we took in sail and got the engines going again, and with a lookout constantly in the crow's nest to direct our devious twistings and turnings, we continued throughout the night, with the occasional screech and bump of ice to haunt our slumbers. This bumping was supplying us with extra work, for it strained the ship's timbers no little, and the pumps were our principal recreation, the ship leaking considerably.

During the middle watch bigger gaps and wider lines showed to the westward, so our course was accordingly altered; by 4 a.m. that course, instead of N.E., was S.W. By way of a change from the recent sparkling brilliance of the atmosphere, this morning was so thick that we could not see very far; but being sent to the masthead lookout, I saw, over the blanket of mist, free water both to the north and the south. Thus throughout the day we steered a series of devious courses in hunting open water; and up there I experienced the deep sense of loneliness that attacks a man when perched up in the crow's nest, staring out across the illimitable wilderness of ice, veined only slightly by the ever-shifting water lanes. The sight even of just one seal was warming and heartening, as presenting a relief to the everlasting brooding mystery of the frozen south. Furthermore, sight of a basking seal gave us an added interest in life, for, if at all possible, the fellow was promptly shot, not only with a desire to replenish our larder, but also to eke out our supply of fuel.

All hands were very fit these days, in excellent spirits, and possessed of appetites that would have created dismay in the soul of a boarding-house keeper. The cessation of the ship's wearisome, exasperating rolling and pitching brightened our outlook, I think; it is

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impossible to keep optimistic and joyous when you're being hove about like a parched pea on a hot shovel. We did not realize fully how trying that incessant liveliness of the little ship was until it ceased; but now our troubled souls were given a chance to forget the galling fatigue, and so we laughed and rubbed our hands and decided that the Antarctic wasn't at all a bad health resort.

The weather was steadily growing colder, though not nearly so cold as I had been led to believe it would be down here in the Antarctic Circle. I had expected a frigidity that would freeze the eyelids to the cheeks and the breath on the lips; but my experience of this temperature was that it was more bearable than an average clammy winter day in Scotland. On February 10 we had the greatest cold of the voyage thus far, but we made no complaints about it, for once more our bows were notched on the south point of the compass and we were driving through heavy pack. No lanes were visible even from the masthead, so all we could do was just to hack doggedly on, in a sort of blind yet hopeful quest of some open passage as yet invisible.

Not that we always pushed on blindly, let it be understood. There are certain indications by which men are led down here where fresh instincts are created and the old familiar senses of sight and hearing are given a temporary rest. Invariably where there is water, even though it be beyond our range of vision and tucked away below the horizon, the sky above is definitely darkened, as it were, by a faint rain-cloud. This is known as a water-sky, and, I suppose, must be due to reflection. Throughout the middle watch this day a shoal of seals followed us—thankful to us, no doubt, for breaking the ice and permitting them access to open air. At 2 a.m. Mr. Jeffrey ascended to the masthead, and with a shout of delight announced open

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water to the south-west, and towards this welcome clearance we joyfully steered. As a change from previous mist, the dawn of this day was wonderfully brilliant—a gorgeous display of natural colouring that awed the senses and turned one's thoughts upwards. Glorious sunshine continued throughout the day; high spirits characterized all aboard; the atmosphere was intoxicating. The nearest land, we found, was 2,160 fathoms away, less than three miles; but the direction was purely vertical, and the distance was measured by our sounding machine. During all this day we headed fairly south through encouragingly open water, with countless killer whales, seals and Adelie penguins to companion us. But our heartening progress was arrested towards evening by a gradually thickening pack, and the bumping and scrunching recommenced as we crashed along through virgin ice.

The ice thickened through the night; the morning found us in really heavy pack, making practically no headway, and at two o'clock a fresh sounding gave us a depth of 1,450 fathoms. This fairly rapid shoaling seemed to indicate that land could not be far distant. In order that our then position might be plotted down on the map the following details may be useful: Noon position, February 11, latitude (by observation)  $68^{\circ} 52'$  south; longitude (observation)  $16^{\circ} 43'$  east. Run for previous twenty-four hours and course made good: S. 15 E, 5L miles. Temperature,  $18^{\circ}$  F. No colder, you will see, than many a Scotch winter day; almost as cold, let us say, as an average English summer!

It appeared towards evening as if we could not under any circumstances make much more progress, for floes of great weight were everywhere about, packed so closely that it was a miracle we made any headway whatsoever; for heavy floe ice seems at sight to be as invulnerable to the attack of a ship's bow as so much granite. How-





The *Quest* is frozen in.



Forging Ahead Through Loose Pack Ice.



In the Antarctic: The *Quest* a mass of Frozen Spray.

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ever, we persisted, and scratched and bored a little way farther. Through the night this sort of work continued, an inch gained every now and then, and no definite headway secured; and by morning—a beautiful clear, sunny, typical Antarctic morning—the pack was to all intents and purposes impenetrable. Through the four hours of the morning watch I doubt if we made more than a mile. As we were only expending our valuable fuel to no definite purpose, the ship was stopped at about 8 a.m.—literally frozen in.

With the phlegm of the explorer, who comes to accept all circumstances without repining, we put out a Jacob's ladder, and tumbled out on to the ice for a welcome leg-stretching; and it was good to see Query's delight at finding freedom from the narrow confines of the ship. He was like a mad thing—all over the place at once, up in the air, scooting at our heels, dodging and larking like a born joker. He was coming on well, growing to be a fine dog with a splendid coat. Afterwards I helped Mr. Wilkins to photograph the most interesting details of our surroundings.

The colour effects about here were rather amazing. Those who have never seen pack-ice probably get an idea that it presents one long, unbroken wilderness of staring whiteness to the gaze; but such an idea is wrong, especially when the sun is shining. The sunset effects were particularly wonderful, the ice taking to itself all the colours of the rainbow. At noon it is golden, but with the sun lowering itself down the long path of the western sky, the snow above the ice assumed a delicate pale pink tinge, a veritable *Alpen-gluhe*, with every protruding hummock throwing a mysterious shadow, whilst newly frozen water was a vivid green and shining like a mirror. But the paradox of the Antarctic is that the better the weather overhead the less promising the chance of making headway. Clear weather predicates

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tight pack, misty weather loose ice; so you can't have it both ways. Commander Wild was anxious about this time. The main thing he dreaded was lest the *Quest* should get properly frozen in, for she was not of suitable construction for this ordeal, her shape being wrong to resist the inevitable lateral pressures. We had visions of seeing her cracked like a nutshell by the vicelike nip of the tightening ice, and other visions of the ice parting and permitting her to drop clean down to the floors of the Antarctic sea!

Fresh soundings were taken when we returned to the ship, and rapid shoaling was indicated. A series of magnetic observations were also made by Mr. Jeffrey and Mr. Douglas, so that the day was not only enjoyable but lucrative. But as nothing was to be gained by remaining there we took advantage of a chance to break up the young ice, and the ship was turned away to the north again, after much intricate manœuvring, in search of an opening that would permit her to advance farther to the south.

During the middle watch there was a further decrease of temperature, nothing very alarming, but not particularly promising, as low temperature naturally means heavier pack. We were then steaming in a general N.N.E. direction through fairly heavy ice, broken here and there by open water. Shortly after 3 a.m. the sky, over all its vast dome, assumed a glorious pink radiance, which deepened in parts to vivid purple and a most lovely blue. The water reflected these colourings, and also the floes themselves to a certain extent, and there we had a perfect picture of the South. The open water spaces were strangely regular, and we appeared to be steaming through a series of open docks with marble quays and pink-purple water; it was for all the world like a dream city. About thirty yards away on the port bow a tall berg glittered in the orange-gold glory of the

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sunrise, like a stately cathedral. All the fairy tales in all the world seemed possible when gazing at this earthly paradise; but . . . !

We were fetched back to the earth by a smell of burning that suggested the extreme opposite of paradise. There was a big blaze at the base of the funnel, which looked extremely alarming, and Mr. Jeffrey, who had the watch, immediately called all hands, under the impression that the bunkers were afire. Old Mac and myself drenched the flames with buckets of water and fire-extinguishers, and found that the whole blaze resulted from someone's temporary carelessness in leaving a coil of tarred rope too close to the funnel's base. Maybe the glory of the morning had a soothing effect on the troubled souls of those who turned out in obedience to the alarm, for though very scantily clad they did not even murmur a protest against the rude awakening.

In the afternoon we made the same course through open pack. Four seals were shot and flayed at 6 p.m. The crow's nest lookout reported clearer water on the starboard bow away to the eastward, and course was accordingly altered to reach the promised opening, which, when we reached it, proved to be as free as it looked, and so we made good, even progress for a while. Only for a while, however, for after an inspiring burst of speed—unfortunately our bows were pointed in the wrong direction—we were again held up.

The chief engineer, Mr. Kerr, had been busy lately in constructing a harpoon for Mr. Douglas, and to-day he formally presented him with the finished article, as if it were some newly discovered treasure. To test this fearsome weapon Mr. Douglas took up a position on the rail, as eager as Macduff himself for combat; and as there were any number of crab-eaters swimming about, he let drive at one as it came alongside. He aimed true to the mark; it was a wonderful throw. However, it is

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better to draw a veil. Mr. Kerr's enthusiasm was greater than his constructive powers, for as the seal felt the agonizing bite of the harpoon it gave a swirling leap and a quick turn, and the famous harpoon bent double, dropped clear of the hide, and the seal got away with a flick of its tail, almost as if it sent an insolent message to the fabricator of the weapon that had caused it torment.

## CHAPTER XIII

### Going Doggedly On

COMMANDER WILD decided to get clear of the pack altogether and work to the westward before again attempting to make for the land, and consequently he held on the northerly course, through close but broken ice. I had the wheel at 4 a.m., after he came to this decision, and as the steering was nothing to worry about, I found myself with time on my hands to study the trifling happenings that went on around the ship; and it is the trifles that make for interest during a sojourn in solitudes. So that I found a lot of enjoyment in watching the manœuvres of a sea-leopard, who kept shoving his big ugly head up above water some little distance away. He differed from ordinary seals in the respect that he refused to come near to the ship. Every now and then it was as though his curiosity got the upper hand. He stared at the *Quest* with an expression that was laughably suggestive of a taxi-driver estimating the tip-giving possibilities of a fare; but discretion was his strongest feature, and after a long survey he invariably turned up his nose at us, gave a flick of his tail and dived again.

The *Quest* was leaking badly again, by reason of the savage bumping she had endured in her struggles through the pack, and the order of the day was: Hands to the pumps! Some of us pathetically declared that we had pumped the entire Antarctic Ocean out of our bilges, and that in a little while we should be aground for sheer lack of water; but much as we pumped there was always more water trickling in; for exercise, indeed, we lacked nothing. When day came the clear sky was

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gone, a dull grey and brooding had given place to the brilliant colouring, and the breeze was cold and biting. We thought longingly of our Polar clothing lying uselessly in store at Cape Town, whence we had been unable to retrieve it, and, biting on the bullet, made the best of it.

There was plenty of variety that day. Our course alternated between steady steaming through wide-open lanes and dogged thrusting through close pack-ice, whilst during the official hours of night a lot of snow fell; and, to remind us that the *Quest* was a mobile entity, a moderate but growing swell began to tempt her into a fresh display of her aquatic gymnastics.

For the next twenty-four hours or so we continued along similar lines. Open water in stretches, loose pack alternating, and a lot of snow falling; there you have the conditions. But the increasing predominance of water showed us that we were approaching open sea; so, too, did the growing swell. A sounding of 2,340 fathoms showed us that we were leaving the land behind us, and an increasing temperature backed the idea; but though the thermometer registered 34° F. we found the cold much more biting and penetrating, by reason of the raw-edged wind that was blowing stirring up the marrow in our bones and setting the teeth a-chatter. Killer whales and seals provided plenty of local colour, and I was much interested in watching one seal that was perched on a lonely floe far too small for it. It was like a very fat woman in a very small donkey-chaise, and I wondered what would happen when the floe capsized.

After a while we ran alongside the ice and moored the ship to a big, hummocky floe. What this was for I did not immediately understand, for the seniors of the ship did not go about the decks shouting their intentions to all hands; and though I felt myself an integral part of the expedition, I was not in the leader's confidence



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at every moment of the day. No doubt if I'd been a hero of fiction the commander of the expedition would have left the running of the show to me, and welcomed my advice; but this being real life I kept in the background and did as I was told. Then I learnt by chance that we were about to water ship. It seemed to me that ice congealed from salt water was about the last substance in the world out of which to make fresh water; but I was told that in the process of freezing much of the salt in sea-water is precipitated, and that the upper portions of the floes at least are always quite fresh.

Several of the hands went out on the ice with pick-axes and commenced to chip off the tops of the hummocks. Others carried the resultant blocks to the edge of the floe and hove them to waiting hands on deck, who stowed them in a huge heap on the poop. By stretching the imagination during this operation it was possible to conceive oneself a millionaire potentially. Ice in a tropical city was worth so much a pound. We had ice, lots of it—continents of it. If only the ice could be transported and retailed, the treasures of the Indies would have seemed like chicken-feed by comparison, and Jules Verne could quite easily have managed the trifling task of efficient transportation. However, he was not aboard. So we remained poor.

Melted down, this ice-water proved quite palatable; a great improvement, indeed, on the stale water, much churned about by long rolling, in our tanks.

With a sufficient store of ice aboard we cast off from the floe and proceeded, until we ran clear of the pack altogether; and then Commander Wild, realizing how rapidly our fuel was diminishing, and knowing how many hundreds of miles of icy wastes we still had to penetrate—with no coaling stations nearer than a few thousand miles—ordered the engines to be stopped and sail to be made. At 6 p.m. we were well clear of ice

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and bowling along at a vigorous pace to the N.W., with a stiff, uncommonly chilly wind astern.

At three o'clock in the morning, cold, raw and dark, all hands were roused out to wear ship. I doubt if I shall ever forget those bitter bleak mornings. To turn out of a snug, if narrow bunk, half-awake, with the dregs of sleep still clinging to sticky eyelids and parched palates, to be required to heave and haul at cold, frozen ropes, with water swishing weirdly above your knees and slapping its feathers of spray into your face—ugh! To grope for a stray coil of iron-hard rope in two feet of water, and, just as you were gripping it, to have the heel of some shipmate's sea-boot come down on your fingers excruciatingly—ugh—ugh! To feel the raw wind biting through to the core of your dismal soul; to hear the hurl and rush of water against your oilskins; to steady to the ship's wild plunging—who'd sell a farm and go to sea! But the job had to be done; the welfare of the ship demanded that every man should do his best and bite off his natural growls ere they were definitely enunciated, lest growl begot louder and bitterer growl; so the job was worried through. By the manœuvre of wearing, the ship—not quick in stays by reason of her propeller—was turned to face the pack-ice again, and by nine o'clock at night we were again in the stream-ice, with a heavy swell running, the ship improving on her previous liveliness and thick snow falling. Peggying was actually a welcome task, because it occupied the mind and kept one below.

For a change the middle watch was entirely dark, and as we were moving amongst some really nasty lumps of ice—chunks that could have made a comprehensive mess of the ship—it was necessary to proceed with the utmost caution. The swell continued with unabated determination, and all the ship's upperworks were thickly covered with snow. We had miniature avalanches every few

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minutes through the wild rolling, the ship seeming determined to rid herself of her fleecy covering. Imagine a buck-jumping mustang newly harnessed into a landau, and you will get some idea of her fretful behaviour.

With the coming of the grey dawn Mac and myself, lone-handed, set the squaresail; but shortly before eight bells Mr. Jeffrey gave orders to stow it again. By some mischance we let it go by the run, and, thanks to the rolling and the breeze, it promptly went overboard, to trail in the water and soak itself with icy brine. There was nothing for it save to try to retrieve the runaway canvas. The squaresail is a heavy sail, and in the ordinary way seven or eight hands are told off to handle it. We were two alone, so picture Mac's attitude towards the matter. He made a great outcry, lifted his face to the indifferent sky and cursed—how he cursed!—the Antarctic gods who decreed that two poor men should be required to perform the work of half a score. Cursing, he worked like a plantation full of niggers; the harder he cursed, indeed, the harder he pulled, until, as though the bad language were indeed, as Marryat says, the powder behind the cannon-ball, we mastered the refractory canvas and brought it aboard, saturated, stiff and unkindly. Believe me, we bragged about our achievement afterwards. I am not sure that we did not derisively inform the other members of the expedition that they might conveniently apply for long leave, in that we two were quite capable of carrying on unaided. And the many, very many, stormy petrels that surrounded the ship in the early morning seemed to be cheering us for our display of heroic endurance. The snow continued to fall with unabated persistence, and, meeting on our sluicing decks the water Mac and the sail had lifted aboard over our rails, dissolved into hideous slush. The stoutest sea-boots in existence cannot adequately cope with the bite of such slush, and for

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myself I lost all sensation in my feet. The afternoon brought a lessening of the snowfall—brought fine weather, indeed; and we smiled and patted ourselves on the back, and assured ourselves that we were steaming nobly in the right direction—Southward Ho! In open water, too, though that water was very unkindly in its motions, and the *Quest* as lively as ever.

By 5.30 we ran into ice again, and after bumping and boring until ten o'clock hove-to for the coming of daylight, so that we should not waste coal in aimless wandering to and fro without any resultant progress in the right direction. Blundering about in the dark was certainly an unprofitable pastime for a ship with depleted bunkers. Let it be remembered that the atmosphere near the edge of the pack is not nearly so clear as it is well inside the ice masses, and consequently the weather is generally very dirty and the nights as black as the inside of your hat. To my regret the doctor on this day sent me to bed because of a chill I had acquired, possibly after the frantic struggle with that pernicious squaresail.

On Monday, February 20, Commander Wild decided to work to the westward, towards rumoured land, reported by Ross as "an appearance of land" in 1842. We accordingly got under way once more at three in the morning, steaming a S.W. course through plenty of thick ice dotted with large bergs. At nightfall the engines were stopped through the dark hours, and I, still in my bunk, enjoyed an undisturbed sleep. It made up for the lost food, denied to me by the doctor—not that I wanted it.

At the first show of daylight the *Quest* once again got under way, to plough a devious course through fairly thick ice. I was told that I might get up and eat a meal, though I was still kept from performing duty on deck. Just as well, maybe, for it was snowing heavily, and I found occupation enough in restowing my locker

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and bunk and donning a change of warmer clothing—with which I was well supplied, thanks be to kindly donors. Then, in a spirit of carelessness, for the day of leisure seemed to demand some ceremonial, I opened two boxes of Scotch shortbread that I had brought with me from Aberdeen; discovered the contents beautifully crisp and fresh; sent one box forrard to the other mess, and we aft consumed the remaining box with eager appetites. As though even the weather were growing hilarious, it blew a heavy gale that night, and the ship was necessarily hove-to. Sleep was impossible by reason of the scream of the wind amongst our stripped spars and the grinding and scraping of ice along our outboard planking. Not very easeful hours for a pseudo-invalid; but I'd been told that I could turn to on the morrow, so what did it matter?

During the morning watch we drifted clear of the ice, and going on deck I found open water about, snow thickly falling and the ship wreathed in sound-deadening white. The wind, vigorous and chilly, gave us a level six knots of speed with all sail set, and we bowled along in heroic fashion, until at midnight ice was sighted, and then it was a case of "all hands shorten sail!" with a vengeance, for we found that otherwise we couldn't check our headlong career and seemed disposed to ram solid floes, which could only result in disaster. This day was Worsley's birthday, a day to be celebrated with mirth and feasting, for the birthday boy had reached his fiftieth year and was still going strong and looking youthful. From some hidden corner of the ship beer materialized—genuine, actual beer, which was greeted with loud acclamations. After a satisfying repast of seal-meat and the like—and seal-meat can be jolly good—Green entered, bearing with graceful ease, posturing like a Pavlova, a noble birthday cake that was iced to perfection and inscribed with

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an insulting motto. Worsley himself, as being the pivot on which these celebrations turned, was instructed to cut the cake, and was furnished with a boarding-axe to do it. It resisted his efforts; for Green, in a humorous moment, had iced a 56-lb. sinker belonging to the sounding machine. However, after the gibes and lurid language had ceased, the real cake was produced and we stodged ourselves to our complete satisfaction. The occasion was a welcome break in an existence that tended to become monotonous and also somewhat wearing, for the work of grinding through the pack tends to deaden one's senses somewhat and breed a fretting irritation against unavoidable circumstances.

Shortly before midnight Mr. Wilkins, who had charge of the first watch, roused out the watch below to set the squaresail. We groaned both inwardly and outwardly. We knew what it would be—clambering on top of the forrard deck-house, fumbling about with the steel-hard, frozen canvas, with everybody growling and everybody in everybody else's way! A lovely job, but nothing, so I was repeatedly told, to real old-fashioned windjamming. Oh, but it tests one's temper to be turned out on a cold night, with the ship dipping her rails under water at every roll, for such a job. But mark how Nature brings its own palliative! Once the arduous task was performed—thanks to our efforts—our blood was hot and tingling, our spirits elated, and we felt more like singing than cursing—we forgot that we cordially detested our next neighbours and had sworn cold-blooded feud against those we most esteemed, and in a happy frame of mind repaired to the bridge to comfort ourselves with hot, strong coffee, shared with Mr. Jeffrey, who had the wheel. The sea was rather plentifully dotted with "growlers," but we had little difficulty in clearing them, since the ship was proceeding under sail alone and more kindly on her helm.

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Later in the day we passed through a very strange area of finely powdered ice—this powder lying on top of small snowball-like fragments of ice—which gave one the impression of moving through a lake of milk. From this phenomenal area we passed into a belt of newly-freezing ice, and everywhere was greyness—sky, sea and ice alike blending into one grim monotone.

During the night we sailed into heavy ice, which checked our way and compelled us to head again for the north and open water, which was reached before 8 a.m., the engines going slowly. Followed a period of dodging bergs and finding the pack again, pack that grew heavier until nightfall brought the need to heave-to, by reason of the indifferent visibility, until daybreak came, when course was resumed, but always to the north and west. We tried the pack repeatedly, but instead of butting our heads against an implacable wall, whenever we found that further progress was impossible we followed the line of least resistance and edged away in search of more impressionable zones. The sound of shots startled me from a peaceful doze at 8 a.m., and with mad dreams of hectic adventure troubling me, raced on deck, where I was greeted with a truly wonderful sight. Hundreds, literally hundreds of seals were in plain view; many of the floes—not very big ones—held ten or a dozen of the brutes apiece. We made very good use of this opportunity, you may be sure, because of our yearning bunkers.

A little later in the day, as I was scrubbing down below, some would-be benefactor yelled to me to get on deck as quickly as I could, to behold another great sight. A sight for the gods it was, indeed, for the ship had run into a great school of whales—more than eighty really large fellows, and in every direction these giants were blowing like geysers. The click of a cinema camera showed us that Mr. Wilkins was already busy

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—I feel sure that if the *Quest* had been sinking he would have secured a realistic picture of her final plunge from the truck!—and we others could only marvel at the wondrous splendour of the sight. The whales did not remain long in view, however; they disappeared ahead on their own occasions, and we spectators discovered that work called us. We spent a watch trying to pump out the forehold, and did not entirely succeed. The other principal event of note was when Major Carr cut my hair with a very blunt machine—and I decided that scalping might have been preferable.

The night came on very dark and misty, and it was necessary to exercise the greatest caution in proceeding, for the sea was thickly strewn with growlers of a dangerous size, so that it would have been folly to continue at our customary speed. Consequently we crawled, engines going dead-slow, and two men alertly on watch on the bridge to direct the helmsman whenever solid ice showed looming through the haze.

Day followed day with but small variety now. The cold and the actual fatigue engendered by this ice-fighting bred a love of sleep; so that we spent our every spare moment, I think, in coiling down reserves of slumber. In one waking period it was decided to tie up alongside a big growler and renew our fresh water in a manner similar to that I have previously described, but the heavy swell caused the berg to pitch and heave very alarmingly, so we desisted; and it was just as well, for had we continued we should probably have had our side stove in, and that would have concluded my narrative before the appointed time. With wind falling light it was necessary to make fresh inroads on our very precious fuel, but we proceeded at an economical speed and entered open pack, where we continued during an entire day. Seal-meat was our staple diet, and we grew to like it, though I discovered that it lacked in "spirit."



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At midnight we were once more among the growlers, and it was so dark that we could only tell their presence by hearing the growling wash of the seas on them as they tilted with the high-running swell. Even with engines merely turning over the centres we hit several of these ugly fellows, and from the reluctance with which they bobbed and bowed away it was plain to understand that they were very deeply submerged. With welcome light showing at 2 a.m. it was possible to proceed with greater confidence, and in the forenoon, well assured of the safety of the ship, the two surgeons, Dell, Argles, and myself spent a strenuous watch trimming coal in the bunkers. By contrast with previous trimming in tropical waters, we found it quite a pleasant operation; and no doubt, at the South Pole itself, had we gone there, we should have counted it a pastime! Latitude means as much, perhaps, so far as work is concerned, as it does in regard to morals! During the afternoon we hard workers were also strenuously employed in ballasting ship more satisfactorily. She was carrying too much topweight, and the opinion was that this added to her dire rolling propensities; so as our depleted coal supply afforded us plenty of room, we carried below and methodically stowed an amazing assortment of oil-drums, spare spars, oars, davits, and, indeed, everything that could be spared from the upper deck. A lot of snow petrels watched and seemed to criticize our labours—we had been seeing numbers of these birds of late. Apparently as a result of high living on seal-steaks and brain sauce, the men of the skipper's watch took a pull on the main topsail sheet and carried it away as if it were a piece of twine. To all seeming a reduced diet was indicated; but maybe it was merely zeal!

The 1st of March was conspicuous by reason of its sunny brightness; a day of which to take advantage to

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dry soaked gear. All spare sails were run into the rigging for the genial breeze to play through, and when thoroughly dried were stowed away below as an addition to the ballast. We sighted a most beautiful iceberg of towering height on this day, and I express the opinion here—expecting no profits from the same—that it is worth anyone's while to go South if only for the sake of seeing such stupendous loveliness.

Being once more in open sea the ship's rolling recommenced, as a sign and a token that our arduous labours in ballasting her had been in vain. Not that we were hitting the floes. Thanks to the tempestuous brash and several belts of heavier ice; but officially we were out of the pack. Then once more we ran into heavier ice after breakfast on March 2nd, and it was necessary to shorten sail because of the force with which we were hitting the floes. The heavy weather continuing, I got another job of work: to clean out the chart-room. Two jam tarts had slipped free from their moorings, and the chart-room was simply a viscous horror of jam. Sir Ernest Shackleton always contended that a square inch of jam was sufficient to anoint a square mile of surface, and he was right. Several square inches of jam went to the making of those tarts, and so the chart-room was sticky! This done, I accompanied Mac aloft, where he delights to be, especially when the ship is throwing herself about, to repair the port square-sail outhaul, which had carried away when the sail was let go in the forenoon.

Proceeding steadily to the westward, always in search of open leads to the south, we encountered fickle weather: one day fine and serene, the next squally and snowy, the ship placid and comfortable now, and, again, making heavy weather of it and washing herself down fore and aft with water that no pumps were needed to supply. Argles contrived to mix himself up with quite

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a number of accidents, as a result of the big rolls we took. Argles, it should be remembered, is the stokehold's bright light, the bunker king—being the official coal-trimmer. Emerging from his favourite den into the stokehold, the ship rolled savagely, and he, missing his hold, was thrown clean across the stokehold, bruising his side badly. No doubt thoroughly sickened of the dangers of below, he made his painful way on deck, and here found no better luck. He slipped, travelled at express speed from scupper to lee scupper, and fetched up with a thud against a chance stanchion. Now, a hurt man demands a sympathetic audience to whom his woes can be recounted. Argles discovered in me the proper recipient of his confidences concerning the *Quest* and her rolling, and came down to the wardroom to ease his overloaded soul. The *Quest*, righteously angry at the aspersions cast upon her—for she was a very model of dignity when she was not trying to dance a cake-walk, and no doubt considered herself superior to all other craft afloat—promptly gave the father and mother of a roll and chucked him clean over the table! After that he retired in a silence that was redolent with the odours of brimstone.

With our waking hours amply occupied in work of varying kinds—and especially the never-ending labour of cleaning ship—time passed uneventfully enough. We saw much floating ice—bergs of vast expanse and mighty height; and as the nights were black dark between ten and two—regular graveyard blackness—it was necessary for the watch to supply extra look-outs in the narrowest part of the bows, where, from a comparatively low level, it was possible to detect the presence of big ice by its blackness against the greater blackness of the sky. By dint of these precautions we successfully negotiated quite a number of large bergs that might otherwise have brought disaster upon us. The second

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we saw a shadow we yelled, and the ship, answering her helm cleverly, dodged. No time to waste at this job, because often enough we were almost on top of the berg before we realized it was anything beyond a fantasy of the strained brain. But after dense nights we were given one with star-spangled, luminous heavens, and got a glimpse of the eerie dancing lights of the Aurora Australis. After seeing this atmospheric phenomenon I went below and turned in, and was rudely wakened by several considerable bumps and jolts, which gave me the impression that the ship was being ruthlessly battered to pieces. Hurrying on deck, I found that we were under plain sail in amongst a veritable morass of large growlers—some big enough to deserve being called bergs, indeed; and were hitting them right and left, willy-nilly. To my uninstructed mind it appeared the ship must be suffering really serious damage; she seemed uncontrollable and determined to batter herself to splinters against the implacable bergs; but whatever her other faults, she was a stout little packet, built by men with consciences, if without imagination, and beyond a few slivers of timber torn from her and a few started planks she appeared to be but little the worse. Of course, had we been under steam, we should probably have run through this chain of bergs; but a high berg becalmed her and made her temporarily unresponsive to her helm.

It was a delightful morning: bright and clear, and the sun played gay games with the whiteness and soft yellows, the browns, purples and deep blues of the pack. We reached open water again about noon—where were only a few smallish pieces of ice; and when evening fell had another of those wonders of colourful splendour presented to our attention by Nature, the master scene-painter, who seems to wield a more glorious brush down in the Antarctic than anywhere else in the world.

Morning brought a flaming golden sun uplifting

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itself from the south-east in a welter of radiant glory that suffused the entire horizon. Being once again free of ice we made sail and stopped the engines—harbouring our precious coal—and continued on a westerly course with a light northerly breeze, balmy and soothing, to urge us forward. But early appearances were deceptive; and by eight o'clock the wind had freshened considerably, whilst by noon a full gale was blowing. We were, however, under the lee of the pack, and the sea failed to rise, consequently even the *Quest* behaved decently. The snow, though, drove down in a blizzard, the harsh flakes striking the skin like grapeshot, and the face of the waters was blotted out in a fine powdery drift of ice particles that gave an aspect of utterly bleak desolation. The gale continued to increase in violence until 2 p.m., when it was so heavy that all hands were roused out to double-reef the foresail. Strenuous work in that breeze of wind, with the driven snow pelting us mercilessly; but we reaped the reward of our labours, for it eased the weight of the sail, making the ship pretty snug and sea-kindly. Not for long was our peace to endure, however. At eight bells—4 p.m.—heavy ice was met, and we were required to take in the foresail altogether. Some difficulty was experienced in making it fast. We struggled with might and main; and just as we congratulated ourselves that we had the lashing, cracking monster under control, the wind, with a howl of demoniacal glee, snatched it from our grasp and flung it riotously aboard on its breast, whilst we, our fingers numbed and the blood oozing from beneath our torn nails, had to set our teeth and start all over again. But, as usually happens after shortening down, the wind quickly abated, so that by midnight we were able to proceed in something approaching comfort again.

## CHAPTER XIV

### We Make for Elephant Island

DURING the middle watch commencing at midnight of March 5 it froze hard, but the pack was more open, and, after running north for some time, we altered course and made more to the westward, Commander Wild's idea being to skirt the pack as far as possible. We entered the ice again in the morning. During the previous few days remarkably little animal life had greeted our eyes; there was practically nothing to break the awful, monotonous desolation; but on this day we saw a single Adelie penguin, dignifiedly in command of a solitary hummock—looking for all the world, so old-timers said, like the skipper of an old-world windjammer—one of the kind who wore a frock coat and tall hat: a gaff-topsail hat, as they used to call them—even when rounding Cape Horn in a rip-snorter—loftily conning his ship through the smother and haloed in his own enormous dignity. Desirous of disturbing this colossal equanimity—and I have seen honest Kirk elders on a Sabbath morning who looked frivolous by comparison—we made rude remarks to the bird, who treated us with lofty disdain, and beyond showing a supercilious interest—as a pretty waitress in a café might show to a chafing client—took no further notice of us, until Captain Worsley, who is rather clever at mimicry, gave a loud “caa-aa,” which started Master Penguin's hoops and lifted him from his god-like aloofness. He took to flight with all speed, casting scared glances backwards as he went, as if he thought the special Antarctic devil were after him. Still laughing at the ludicrous spectacle,

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we tied up to a large floe and iced ship, an operation occupying the greater part of the afternoon, and causing us much amusement by reason of Jeffrey's agility. He offered to catch any ice that was thrown to him, and we were resolved to beat him—much, I fear, being thrown *at* him. Nevertheless, he held his own pretty well, spite of the thunderous fusillade with which he was assailed.

Query ventured on to the floe on this occasion and betrayed great interest in a killer whale that was swimming about near at hand. He barked himself hoarse at the monster without causing it any perturbation; but of a sudden, as if bored by his exhibition of ill-feeling, the killer rose quite close to the floe and "blew" for all the world like a Bowery tough spitting disdain, whereupon Query tucked tail between his quarters and bolted like a scared rabbit.

The following day was marked by an increase in the cold and a tightening of the ice. I spent the day in proper sailorizing work, under the excellent tutelage of old Mac; helping him to repair the mizen tack and secure the gaff. He was a very capable instructor, and from him I learnt how to perform most intricate tricks of seamanship—he was always patient and ready to answer questions, and I look on him to this day as my sea-daddy. He had a way of imparting information that left a definite impression in the mind, and many a University professor might have benefited by adopting his plan. Coming to very heavy pack we had to interrupt our westward course and once more to head away to the north, where we passed large bergs.

Sunrise of extraordinary beauty heralded yet another day. Beautiful though the dawning was we considered it pessimistically, for a fair dawn down in these latitudes so often portends a foul day: our prognostications were fulfilled, for by eight o'clock it was blowing and snowing to beat the band. The day grew dull and ominous

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by contrast with the early brightness; and away on the horizon, owing to the unnatural refraction, strange black shapes appeared like towering mountains and frowning coast-line. It required much mental concentration to avoid giving a false alarm of land, so vivid was the impression conveyed by this Antarctic mirage. Darkness closing in on top of the flurry made it dangerous to proceed, and the *Quest* was accordingly hove-to for the night.

I was called to keep the middle watch, and as I had evidently convinced the after-guard that I was beginning to understand my job, charge of the ship was given to me during this watch; I was left alone on the lookout. Orders were left with me by Mr. Wilkins to call Mr. Jeffrey at once if the ship drifted too near the ice. The ship was hove-to in a large pool and it was still blowing with considerable violence from the south-west. There was not a soul to talk to or to borrow confidence from, and all around and about me was that vast cold wilderness of ice. The loneliness was a sort of wall that seemed to shut me off from all my kind. A salutary lesson in man's minuteness as compared with gigantic natural forces!

We drifted slowly across the pool, and I, feeling that we might come to harm by hitting heavy ice, called Mr. Jeffrey at a quarter to one. He promptly came on the bridge—his presence sent a warm glow clean through me, and my sighs of relief must have ascended to highest heaven. But there was really no cause for alarm, for at one o'clock we came slowly alongside the ice, as if we had been warped into dock, and lay snugly alongside as though in a peaceful harbour. But at 2 a.m. I called Dell and got below—where even sleeping berth-mates seemed genial companions.

Way was got on the ship again during the morning watch, and we proceeded through fairly heavy pack



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which was open in places and dotted with big bergs. The temperature fell considerably at midday, and when on lookout at the masthead, the cut of the wind was bitingly fierce. In the afternoon the floes were larger still and hummocky, and small groups of penguins mounted solemn guard on many of them. The sun shone at intervals through a very hazy sky, and the refraction was even more pronounced than ever, the most astonishingly fantastic shapes appearing on the horizon and sparkling with a silvery light in the sun. Once again we hove-to for the night.

Followed a strenuous day with Dr. Macklin and Naisbitt, tallying and restowing stores, which was not a bad job for cold weather. Outboard the outlook was not inviting: the floes being large and heavy—old Weddell Sea ice, they said it was—and the intervening water frozen over thinly with young ice, which naturally delayed our by no means considerable speed still more. The temperature had dropped to 9 F. At 10 a.m. a noisy commotion on deck fetched us up into the open like corks popping out of a bottle, curiosity overcoming our sense of duty. We found several of the more active-minded of the crew chasing penguins round and round a big floe. The game was a pure farce, the birds stolidly refusing to leave their harbourage, and showing a clever readiness in dodging their pursuers, twisting this way and that like professional footballers, until Argles started playing footer, too. He hurled himself full-stretch at one penguin, tackled it low in approved Rugby style, and fetched it down, squawking and vociferous as a fishwife. The catch was brought aboard alive, and Query displayed canine curiosity in its quaintness, but the penguin was a match for the dog, and once again he had to retreat with his tail between his legs.

At eight p.m. the bosun and I took a sounding; it

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was intensely cold, and by the time we had wound in the last fathom I found myself frozen to the rail. The cold also burst the water-jacket of the paraffin engine that ran the main dynamo, so it became necessary to start the spare dynamo in the engine-room, to run which there was a small steam-engine.

Throughout the night we lay to in rapidly freezing ice, and the skipper grew concerned, for the outlook displeased him greatly. To be frozen in hard and fast would be fatal, consequently just enough way to prevent this happening was maintained on the ship; and then, at 4.30, a full head of steam was raised and an attempt made to get clear. But though we backed and rammed and stopped, and backed and rammed again, making a furious bobbery all the time, the ship, shaking fore and aft at the impact of her bows on the thickening ice and the harsh grind and rattle of the broken stuff filling the air, we made paltry progress, advancing a bare mile during the entire morning watch. To burn coal at that rate without any commensurate progress was foreign to our best interests, so we gave up the attempt and lay to alongside a convenient floe, there to await the pleasure of the elements, and whistle for a favouring breeze. That breeze coming, we drifted to the northward with the ice, which during the forenoon gradually opened. So precious was our coal becoming now that the small quantity required to run the steam-driven dynamo could not be spared, and as the paraffin-run dynamo was out of action, I busied myself in filling and trimming lamps for the ship.

When I went on watch at midnight it was still blowing very strongly from the south. The mere words convey no adequate impression of what an Antarctic gale is like; but if you imagine a northerly blizzard blowing its hardest and then magnify all the unrest and bitter discomfort and annoying insistence of the driving

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sleet and noisy wind by about a hundred, you may gain some idea of the real thing. We were fast frozen into the ice, which every now and then bore against our sides with an impressive and somewhat alarming squeaking sound that was very weird, underrunning the main diapason roar of the storm as it did.

The gale was not long-lived; with the flush of dawn the wind subsided, and the morning broke beautifully clear and calm. All hands turned to after breakfast to ice ship—and there was ice enough and to spare, for even the young ice that had recently formed was now thicker and whiter and older looking, and seemed to be merging into the main pack. Certain of us busied ourselves in squaring off the decks—ridding them of snow, coiling down ropes fairly and stowing away loose gear; and whilst we were so employed a big killer came up close alongside, breaking the ice as he came. These killers are particularly evil-looking brutes, and the nearer view of them you get, the nastier they seem. It must have been a killer that swallowed Jonah—this fellow seemed almost capable of swallowing the *Quest*.

In assisting Mr. Douglas and Mr. Jeffrey to make magnetic observations on the floe during the rest of the morning, working in the hold with Dr. Macklin after lunch and then pumping out the always filling bilges with old Mac, putting a harbour-stow on the topsail and so on, time did not hang very heavily on my hands. My leisure time I spent in heaving chunks of ice along the floe for the edification and amusement of Query, who never tired of chasing the fragments and took a keen delight in the vigorous exercise. Then, at night, a sounding was taken; but after the lead touched bottom the steam winding-engine gave out and we had to leave our cast on the sea's bed until the necessary repairs were effected; and then, as a gigantic red moon came slowly sailing up the sky, we sat back and watched

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the lovely picture it made of the spectral ice that was all about.

Being now, as it were, in dock, regular watches were abandoned: all hands turned to at eight o'clock and continued working until 1 p.m., after which their time was more or less their own for purposes of recreation, with one man standing a two-hour watch during the night, like an ordinary anchor watch aboard an ordinary sea-going ship. The ice was now thickening rapidly; the temperature having dropped to 5 F., but despite this, the water rose steadily in our hold, and first thing in the forenoon Mac, Dell and myself pumped out the ship. Various duties, such as preparing the oil stoves for the boats—very necessary precautions remember, for the threat of being nipped and sunk was very real—overhauling the lamp-room and trimming the lamps occupied my day; but before dinner we younger ones climbed overside and had a rousing game of football on the ice. A lone, lorn penguin, interested in that queerly curious way these birds adopt towards happenings beyond their normal experience, slithered near and begged to be enrolled in our company. Quite unabashed, it held its own against all our tacklings and charges; and when Query took a hand in the game, it chased him incontinently all over the floe—a most comical sight. It was what the Yankees would call *some* football. Penguins and dogs do not usually figure in a Cup Final, nor do the players fall through the ice, as Naisbitt did, at places where floes imperfectly joined up with one another. But it was invigorating exercise enough, and after the close confinement of shipboard, very welcome to men who looked on exercise as a religious rite. We managed to pull Naisbitt out, and he was really none the worse for his adventure. Our football was composed of tied-together gunny-sacks that had held ship's bread. Whilst we played others

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worked; Kerr, for instance, repaired the burst water-jacket of the dynamo engine, so that we were able to run it again and get a light that at least made darkness visible below.

I slept like a log that night, and found myself reluctant to turn out when I was called at 6 a.m., but needs must; and when I got to the bridge I saw the outlook was more promising. The ice was slacker, its nip on our sides less pronounced and the floes were beginning to come apart—a welcome sign. The run of a growing swell caused them to bend visibly, and there was much groaning and snapping, so that one might easily have thought the ice a great living monster that was trying to burst its bonds. Throughout the day, with a slightly higher temperature, the ice opened up more and more. We lost our sounding lead, though—the wire parted owing to the strain—and we had to resign ourselves to the fact with such equanimity as we could command. By evening we lay in a pool of open water, the nip was gone, and we looked forward hopefully to getting under way again on the morrow.

But our hopes proved to be nothing more than ropes of sand; the following day, although the pack was distinguishably thinning, it was still far too close for us to go ahead. A strong gale bellowed furiously from the north-west, but, being from the northerly quarter, it was actually warmer than usual—though its force was so great that the impression conveyed to the senses was that the temperature was falling. In the forenoon Dell rigged up the dredging machine and for Mr. Wilkins's benefit let out 3,300 metres of wire, with dredge and deep-sea thermometer attached. It required the whole afternoon to get it inboard again, with the steam-winch fussing away, very certainly, no doubt, but also very slowly—so slowly, indeed, that after a while, becoming exasperated, we man-handled it and

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made better progress. It was pretty ticklish work, for the dredge wire was constantly being fouled by small floes, and Mr. Douglas out-Blondined Blondin by his dexterity in balancing himself on the wobbling floes and keeping the wire clear with an extended boat-hook. The result justified the exertion, for the dredge contained fifty-seven specimens of quartzite, tuffs and so on; but there was no living matter in the haul, though the rocks were plentifully threaded with worm-cells.

Next day, thanks to a falling thermometer, the ice had thickened, and the floes were compacted once more into a solid mass. Some of these floes, scattered here and there like gaunt icy islands in a sea of ice, were very big, with noticeable hummocks uprearing from the main mass. As a strong southerly wind was blowing, which was favourable to our purpose, we got busy and set topsail and staysail. Seen from outboard we must have looked much more like an ice-yacht than a sea-going ship, I fancy; but under the weight of this canvas we edged a very slow and very difficult way to the north. Our movement was actually with the ice rather than from it—we were acting as motive power to the entire ice-field. Although the ship was officially under way, there was no difficulty in slipping outboard and walking on the ice; and Commander Wild and Captain Worsley, together with Watts, did this. During their promenade they happened upon a large sea-leopard asleep, and the skipper promptly killed it, bringing its head triumphantly back to Mr. Wilkins as spoil of war.

Many of us went for walks during the forenoon, and I took several photographs of the *Quest* in her ice-bound condition. She drifted into a pool of open water during the afternoon, and the skipper and Dr. Macklin went out on the floe with a line to pull her alongside, because we desired to play football again. We found a large, convenient floe and had a hectic game, beating

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the other side 7-4. It is astonishing what a lot of confused exercise you can get out of football on the ice—much more than during ordinary games, even on the muddiest days. It's a fine tonic for depression and ennui and lethargy, and the various ills shipboard life is apt to breed. You have to exert yourself terrifically to make any real headway, and the ball, weighing about a ton when thoroughly sodden, needs the driving force of a steam ram behind it to move it at all. Our side was composed of Dr. Macklin, Mr. Douglas, the skipper, Naisbitt (cook's mate) and myself. Our opponents were the Chief, the Second, Ross and Young (stokers), Major Carr and Watts.

Turning from play to work, we set the squaresail at 6 p.m. and began to move; but almost as we started we had to lower the canvas in a hurry, to avoid what might have been a serious collision with a large floe ahead, and our progress was stopped. In the event of opportunity offering for getting under way during the night, I kept the binnacle lights trimmed and ready for immediate use.

Another day came, to show no practical alteration in the ice-conditions. The wind came away strongly from the S.S.E. and the outlook was bad, for the sky showed no vestige of a "water-sky," and with a lowered temperature the ice was freezing more thickly than ever. Very grim conditions again; but in the Antarctic you don't grouse about circumstances—you make the best of them, and thank your lucky stars when each succeeding day finds your ship still afloat and not crushed to flinders in the pack.

Whatever else we were doing, we were certainly making progress either with the ice or through it. We had made about ninety miles since working into our frozen dock, and that was something to be thankful for.

After breakfast I went for a walk with Dr. Macklin

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and Major Carr. There was a large berg in the distance which we wanted to inspect at close quarters, and this appeared to be a promising opportunity. But we could not get quite close up to it because of the scattered character of the ice in its vicinity, though from our position we could see it making its way through the pack, leaving a long lane of clear water behind as it came. The *Quest* bore up against the pack, throwing broken ice from the bows as a ship throws up spray; and we admired the spectacle—myself a little awestruck—never realizing that Commander Wild was feeling the gravest anxiety aboard, fearing lest the iceberg should charge the *Quest* and damage her badly. Fortunately the menace passed more than half a mile astern and then disappeared over the northern horizon.

These movements of icebergs in the pack are caused by strong currents under the ice which grip the vast submerged portions and urge the giant masses relentlessly onward through everything that lies in their path; and when, owing to the wind or other circumstances, the pack is moving in an opposite direction you get a wonderful illusion of uncontrolled speed and power charging blindly forward.

Getting back aboard, Dell and myself cleared the wire of the Kelvin sounding machine. After a hearty lunch we enjoyed another game of football with a more respectable ball this time—a ball composed of a canvas bag stuffed with cotton waste, which didn't take so much out of our feet and shins. We found a perfectly flat floe whereon to play, though owing to the swell causing the ice to bend and undulate we got a new effect: it was like playing football on a rubber floor.

Throughout the night a sharp lookout was kept for bergs bearing down upon us: a menace of the Polar wastes not often taken into consideration, I fancy, by those who do not know the peculiarities of those parts.



## We Make for Elephant Island

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Several such bergs were in the vicinity and one crossed our bows rather too closely to be pleasant. The temperature was rising during the night, and, in anticipation of a start, the hands were turned to at 6 a.m., with instructions to ice ship. The pack was now much more open, and the engines were gingerly started at six bells—seven o'clock. Once more we were definitely under way, forging ahead with innumerable stoppages and much wheel-work, with "Hard a-port!" "Hard a-star-board!" "Midships!" flying from the watch-officer's mouth like machine-gun fire. Tediously we wound in and out among the floes; but presently, coming to a clear lane of water, sail was set, which quickened our speed, and by eleven o'clock in the morning we were pretty nearly clear of the pack. During the day I counted fifty-six bergs, most of them large.

With an overcast sky and a strong easterly wind blowing, another dawn came. As the day continued the wind increased to a moderate gale. Commander Wild had practically proved to his own satisfaction that Ross's "Appearance of land" was merely a flight of fancy, and he now decided to make for Elephant Island—primarily to obtain blubber for fuel. But apart from any material reason I think there is no doubt that he was inspired by a longing to see again the place where he had spent those famous four and a half months with the survivors of the ill-fated *Endurance* expedition. All aboard who had borne part and lot in that memorable adventure were imbued with the same desire. We headed to the westward and, with a stiff breeze to help us, bowled along at a merry six knots—for us, real clipper speed. But at 5 p.m. we came suddenly on very heavy pack and, dropping our squaresail with alacrity in order to avoid disaster, eased down for the night. With the morning we set sail again, amid extraordinary surroundings. The entire ship was sheeted in ice:

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upperworks, bridge and deck-house appeared to be determined to give an imitation of their environment. Ice was everywhere: bulwarks like hummocks, monstrous icicles pendant from every salient. The deck itself was overlaid with the frozen stuff; and all tackles, ropes and hamper were grotesquely distorted; whilst the rigging was simply solid. The *Quest* was completely transmogrified, like a fairy ship at first glance; but, owing to the freezing up, anything but a ship of dreams when it came to handling her. To go aloft meant breaking a way like pioneers—and, my! it was cold. Mac and I shovelled what seemed like half the frozen Antarctic overboard during the morning watch, and even then the other half was still aboard. Breaking off from this necessary task, we set the squaresail, which seemed scared at the changed appearance of the ship, for it took charge for several hectic minutes, slamming and banging—hammering its blocks against the bulwarks as though determined to sink the *Quest* out of hand. We philosophically decided that the sail was lending a hand in clearing the ice from the upperworks, and I must say the ice-splinters flew vigorously. Being under shell-fire was a small matter by comparison. As a foot or so of water was sluicing across the decks every time the ship rolled, work was not easy; but this water was nothing to worry about, it was merely the *Quest's* happy little way of acting up to her usual reputation, though she did not lift big water over her rails. It was blowing hard and the cold was terrific as the wind came away from the southward; indeed, I believe that this day and the following—March 23 and 24—were about the worst we had experienced. Certain of the old-timers wondered what on earth had ever tempted them down again to the southern seas. Commander Wild said that any man who went Antarctic exploring once was mad, if he went twice he was an adjectived idiot, so that

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he himself—having made five voyages—was competent to inhabit an asylum all to himself. He said this with trimmings—not with flowers.

Conditions were more than a little unpleasant—quite enough to ruffle the normally placid calm of our souls. Every minute some whipping wisp of spin-drift came slogging in our faces, and everything was saltily damp. The only place where it was possible to be even moderately dry was in one's bunk; and the *Quest* did her best to heave a man out into the slopping water that flooded the floors below, even when he coiled down in blanket-haven. Poor Query suffered a lot. Dogs may be philosophers, but their philosophy deserts them under such conditions as those we endured when working along the edge of the pack. And although we were salted, pickled indeed, any amount of the people—even the hardest veterans—succumbed to *mal-de-mer*; or, as this particular brand was even more atrocious than seasickness, let's call it *mal-de-Quest*.

Wearing ship at midnight under these conditions among Antarctic combers was horrible. After a while we hove her to under a topsail, her head pointed to the east; and under these circumstances she revelled in dirtiness. Her rolls were jerky and fitful—so that, even below a fellow felt as if he'd been dropped down a bottomless pit with a long rope attached, which tautened at the unexpected moment and nearly jerked the teeth up through the skull. Whilst wondering what it was all about, another heave and lurch pitched him out of his bunk, and so on.

But even the worst of gales do not endure for ever; and after a while conditions improved. A great orgy of straightening up followed, for everything was filthy and saturated. Then we sighted land from aloft, what time the topsail was being made fast. After living in a

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wilderness of ice and water for so long my heart warmed to that good sight, for I had begun to wonder whether land really existed at all.

By seven o'clock on the morning of March 25, we had Elephant Island on the starboard bow and Clarence Rocks to port. The summits of the peaks were hidden by low clouds, but it was perfectly good land, and heart-warming to a degree, even though snow-flurries frequently hid it from sight. It was something stable in a whirling world of instability.

To the old-timers it was like sighting the Promised Land itself, I fancy. Those who had been with Shackleton in the *Endurance* expedition spent all their spare time staring through binoculars at remembered landmarks—swapping reminiscences and recollections. They shouted and pointed at Cape Valentine, where the draggled survivors of that unfortunate expedition landed after being two hard years adrift in the ice desert, and where Shackleton, who had not slept for eight days, coiled down on the shingle of the beach and slept for eighteen hours without moving an eyelid. We others worked, getting rid of the fresh accumulations of ice and taking running soundings as the ship went forward. It was necessary to hack the purchase blocks clear of their congelment before the rope would run over the sheaves. The evening favoured us with an exceptional mirage—with vast icebergs floating apparently in a sky of purest gold, and shoals of spouting whales swimming in between them, most marvellous to behold. The ensuing sunset was like something by Doré: both the islands in sight seemed to be blazing with fire, and the sky was a flaming crimson, awe-inspiring in its magnificence. I wished I could paint so that I could have transferred that memorable sight to enduring canvas, for my poor words entirely fail to give an adequate description of the atmospheric miracle.

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By four o'clock the following morning, when I went on the bridge, we were coasting along the shore of Elephant Island, which we did not approach too closely, for obvious reasons. And now our minds were filled with the history of that desolate rock; it was the topic of general conversation. They told of how Commander Wild had cheered and brought nineteen men through four of the most difficult months in all the terrible history of Antarctic navigation. They told of how Shackleton, with Worsley and four other stalwarts, had made that amazing passage from Elephant Island to South Georgia in an open boat, and how subsequently the staunch-souled Boss had left no stone unturned till he had brought his stranded comrades back from Elephant Island to civilization. It was a narrative to warm the blood and to make one glory in the pride of race, for it was an epic, no less, told simply as it was, in curt expressions for the most part, without gestures but modestly, in the way that Britons have when narrating heroic deeds.

A high, precipitous coast met our gaze as the ship ploughed forward, with high-soaring crags and a general machicolated effect that made the whole place show as a gigantic mediæval fort; whilst between the jutting crags showed frequent glaciers and glimpses of the towering ice-cap that tops the island. A picture of stern majesty it showed to our ice-wearied eyes. And, too, on the port beam was Cornwallis Island, whilst on the bow were five smaller islands, as though whoever threw the land down there had sprinkled a few handfuls extra for luck.

After breakfast the boatswain and myself re-marked the deep sea leadline, and made a clearance forward to have everything in readiness to let go our long-disused anchor at the appointed time. We rounded-to in a small bay, some hundred yards or so from the sheer

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face of a glacier end, and there dropped our hook and came to rest for a blissful while. Blissful, I mean, by comparison with recent episodes; though no doubt there are some who might count Elephant Island a curious sort of a pleasure resort. But all things go by contrast, and to our tired eyes the most romantic of South Sea Islands could hardly have appeared more desirable.

Magnificent, lofty crags held us in on two sides; the scenery indeed was so striking as to be almost overwhelming; and on the placid water the *Quest* floated like a swan. It was possible at last to lie down without holding on, and for that blessed boon we returned heartfelt thanks.

The party detailed to go ashore was lowering away a boat in preparation, when Query, who had almost gone mad ever since land was sighted and smelt, in his eagerness to get ashore overdid it and dived overboard. We let the boat go by the run and secured him—almost frozen, but really none the worse for his bath. Commander Wild went away in charge of the boat, and to my great delight included me in the party. Before we landed he shot a sea-leopard that showed pugnacious symptoms. They can be very terrifying in the water, these evil-avised brutes. We tied up to a big boulder right underneath the towering blue face of the glacier, and whilst walking ashore it struck me how crazy and rotten that ice-face looked. It seemed as if any minute might fetch down a few hundred tons of it on top of the boat; but we were used to ice by then, and didn't worry.

## CHAPTER XV

### A Rough Time with Ice and Wind

ELEPHANT ISLAND deserves its name : not because of its shape, but because of the innumerable sea-elephants that litter its shores. Furthermore, there were penguins by brigades and divisions, and skua gulls and long-legged, ungainly "paddy" birds. Commander Wild shot nine elephants, one of them being a huge bull measuring over fifteen feet in length.

As our principal reason for visiting the island at all was the desire to renew our fuel supply, we promptly set to work to flense the kill, cutting up the blubber and dragging it over the foreshore to the waiting boat. Another party presently came on shore to carry on in our stead what time we returned to the *Quest* for a meal. Returning, Mac and I were detailed to ferry the boat from shore to ship and ship to shore, whilst Commander Wild ran the hunting and flensing parties, and was so eager in his share of the work that as often as not he was up to his waist in the icy water.

Whilst we worked at this unsavoury, messy, but very necessary job, the scientific staff busied themselves with observations of one kind and another.

After a most strenuous day, soaked in oil and icy water, tired out but rejoicing, we regained the ship late in the afternoon, the last boat bringing a big load of penguins, paddies and seal-meat, together with rocks for the geologists. My intuition concerning the rotten state of the glacier face was well-founded, for as we were hoisting the boat aboard a vast chunk of the glacier broke off and fell with a stupendous roar, sending a

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regular tidal wave racing out towards us. Fortunately we were too far away to be overwhelmed; but if the boat had been under that falling mass—however, she wasn't!

We should have stayed there longer and added to our fuel supply, but, the surf increasing very rapidly and growing to threatening proportions, Commander Wild was anxious to get away before darkness set in; so accordingly we got up anchor at 6 p.m. and made our way round the coast, the *Quest* as nimble as ever as soon as the full weight of the swells got her. We kept at sea, in open water, all through the night, standing on and off from the land, and the morning came bright and sunny, which was, so Dr. Macklin said, unusual round about Elephant Island, where perpetual mists and storms represented the experiences of adventurers. At 11 a.m. we anchored again near a narrow beach, several miles in length, which ran along the foot of high cliffs. From the ship we saw several harems of sea-elephants, with thirty or forty cows in each. A party promptly went ashore to secure more blubber, and the work of the previous day was resumed in all its necessary messiness. Many elephants were closely huddled together in groups on the sand; there were also some crab-eating seals and paddies. Major Carr, evidently feeling the need of exercise, climbed a long way up the rocks, and coming to loose scree, sent down avalanches of pebbles, much to the discomposure of poor Query, who happened to be in the way; while Dr. Macklin, who was following, had to scramble for shelter to an overhanging boulder which saved him from danger. A certain, though not the required, amount of blubber was obtained. Commander Wild remained aboard the *Quest*, having contracted a severe chill through his previous day's exertions. We were still busy at the job when the roaring of the steam whistle recalled the shore-party. An ominous change of weather was taking place, and



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the ship's position promised to be precarious; consequently we were quickly up-anchored and made our way to the lee of some high rocks not far distant, where we again dropped the hook for the night. By nine o'clock it was blowing hard, and by two in the morning a hurricane was raging, coming away for all it was worth from the south-west, so that the rocks which had previously sheltered us were now of no avail. Dr. Macklin had charge of the watch, and so alarmed was he by the weather conditions that he roused Commander Wild, who still was not at all well, telling him that we were dragging our anchor and generally in a rather parlous plight.

All hands were promptly called, and turned out into the roaring frenzy of that appalling night. Word had been sent to the engine-room for instant full steam on the boilers, and immediately the hands turned out the cable was hove short. The *Quest* promptly began to drag more insistently than before, and the outlook was alarming. Rocks to leeward showed very menacing in the darkness, fast-scudding clouds racing behind them and giving them the aspect of moving monsters intent on our destruction. As if to increase their menace, something went wrong with the cables; they wouldn't go down through the spurling gates, but piled up on deck, hampering us. The winch was jammed, but Macklin and Carr went below and cut the bulkhead of the cable locker adrift with axes, giving the chain more room, and eventually the crisis passed, though the weird wailing of the penguins ashore, for all the world like a premature lament over our doom, and the crashing thunder of the near-by breakers, caused us an apprehension that was anything but pleasant. A very high sea was running, and there was nothing to do but count discretion the better part of valour by turning tail to the storm, running away before it for all we were

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worth. Otherwise we stood a remarkably good chance of going to ruin on the pitiless rocks. Once clear of immediate danger, and possessing, as we did, only enough coal for one day's steaming, though the blubber we had secured promised to eke out that meagre supply, we set the topsail, and under it ran like the wind itself, beating all our previous speed records as we hurled from crest to bellowing crest, roaring down sickeningly into the troughs, soaring high and very high, and screaming with the fury of our speed.

By eight o'clock, when next I came on deck, the wind seemed to be increasing, and the *Quest*, racing before it, seemed of no more account than a chip of driftwood. She was heavily listed to starboard, and as her continued existence seemed something of a problem, all hands were summoned to trim ship and shift all movable stores from the boats, top-hamper from the decks, to down below in the empty port bunker. It was wild work, carried out in a wind that was blowing something like a hundred miles an hour; but the ties of common funk bound us all closely together, and the labour went forward with a swing.

Commander Wild had determined to take advantage of the gale to make straightway to South Georgia. According to the evidence of the weather experts, no change in the direction of the wind was likely for some days, and as it was fair for South Georgia, where coal could be obtained, it was decided to make the best of it. Wilkins was almost swept overboard when setting sail; everyone thought he had gone, indeed, but he cheerily announced his continued presence in the land of living, and carried on with his job.

Wild work? I assure you it was wild. To stand without holding on was an impossibility, whole water deluged us, and it was simply a case of keeping the *Quest* ahead of the enormous following seas, which

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rolled up, gathered weight, towered high to a level with our gaff, and then fell with the clamour of sundering worlds in our yeasty wake. The ship was like a scared horse bolting with a bit in its teeth, urged on by the stinging blows on her quarter. Occasionally those blows were punishingly heavy—for about noon a heavy sea pooped us, stove in the after wardroom scuttle, and flooded the entire after-part. Under a lash of spray and occasionally a deluge of whole water, I repaired the damage as well as possible, by means of planks and a tarpaulin cover; and then went below, where everything was floating about in a state of confusion; my own bunk came in for the lion's share of the initial dollop. The water that had drenched me froze after a while and turned me into a very good representation of an iceberg; but that was only a small part of the trouble. It was indeed a case of "one hand for myself and one for the ship"; and working with one hand whilst clinging like a monkey with the other was an exciting experience.

But all things come to an end sooner or later; and after we'd squared up the major part of the damage, the wind lessened during the afternoon, though we were unable to dream of beating back to Elephant Island, as the wind set straight from it, and the course had to be continued towards South Georgia. This was hard lines on the old *Endurance* hands, for they had set their hearts on revisiting their old haunts and fighting their battles o'er again.

I say the wind lessened, but even so it continued a vigorous gale, though the worst of the weight was out of it, and we were able to set more canvas to keep us ahead of the run of the seas. The following day broke fine, and with a brilliant sun shining its happiest on our ice-coated fabric we presented a wonderful spectacle. The ice taking on all the prismatic colours, the effect was well-nigh dazzling—unbelievable, indeed. The *Quest*

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became a flaming jewel as she hurled herself across the white-veined plain of the tumultuous seas.

We crowded on sail for all we were worth, and setting the big, unhandy squaresail, which was frozen stiff, was excellent exercise and caused some lively gymnastics. Both watches were required to clear and set the foresail; under it the ship streaked along with energetic purpose and left a white, yeasty wake astern. With the wind increasing again it was no great while before we were making a level  $7\frac{1}{2}$  knots per hour—unbelievable speed for the old tub, which caused her to give herself all the airs and graces of a China clipper. It was invigorating, because, although the log only recorded  $7\frac{1}{2}$  knots, the fuss that was made was quite equivalent to forty; and by dint of exercise of a bit of imagination it was quite easy to pretend we were breaking all previous ocean records.

Big seas overtook us frequently, however, striking savage blows at us, as if the Antarctic were thoroughly angry at our having escaped its clutches and were determined to beat us even yet. On the night of March 30, at about eleven o'clock, a whacking big fellow overtook us, and we thought we were for the Locker, because we were literally smothered; but we won clear, and after shortening sail ran with greater steadiness though less speed.

During the following forenoon watch our ship reeled off thirty-one knots in the four hours, nearly eight knots per hour. Good going, this; it looked as if the South Georgians had got a grip on the towrope and were hauling us thither hand over hand. Because of the steady swing of the seas, which here run clean round the world without meeting any untoward obstacles, the motion of the *Quest*, though vigorous, was uniform and easy.

On April 1, under similar weather conditions which were growing so familiar that even the capsizing of a



The wake of Loose Ice as seen from the Crow's Nest. (Capt. Worsley is on the ladder.)



A Close-up View of the Pack.



Entering the Pack.



Collecting Ice for replenishing the Water Tanks.

## A Rough Time with Ice and Wind

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tin of syrup in a locker created no more than a passing anathema, Mr. Jeffrey made an April fool of an albatross by catching it. Albatrosses possess an acquisitive nature, and would probably thrive well in Aberdeen. The proper way of fishing for them is to construct a small hollowed triangle out of sheet tin or brass, lash strips of blubber or other highly scented provender along the metal, and stream the bait temptingly astern at the end of a stretch of fishing line. The albatross promptly swoops down for the succulent morsel, and having got a grip of it with its mighty beak, holds on. The drag of the line naturally jams the acute angle of the triangle over the bird's beak, so that even if it wanted to let go it couldn't; and it is, in the result, ignominiously drawn aboard, where, once it has set its feet on the deck, it cannot rise. Then you strangle the gentleman, so that his snowy, downy plumage shall not be discoloured, and skin him, using his wing bones for pipe stems and his beak and wings for trophies.

April 2 started well, but failed to fulfil its initial promise. The wind was coming away in lessening puffs—somewhat tantalizing for the helmsman—but in a while it freshened again with mist and rain, which lessened our outlook considerably and caused some little concern, for we were expecting to sight land and had no desire to overrun our reckoning, with no bunker fuel to help us to steam back against a wind that was always fresh and sometimes strong. Since eyesight was not much use under these conditions, sounding was taken with the Kelvin machine, but no bottom was discoverable! and as the log line fouled the wire after the cast was taken, I got an extra hour's work in clearing the ghastly tangle. A spinning log line and a spinning sounding line together can make a twist that seems invulnerable to human effort; but a bit of that patience taught to Scouts helped, and the tangle was gradually reduced.

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At four in the afternoon the heavier canvas was furled lest we ran too far, and the last of the ice left our decks about the same time, thawed by the persistent rain and the increasing temperature. All the diligent scrubbing with sand and canvas in the world could not have left our planking whiter than had the scouring of the friendly ice. Just as well the ice was gone, for the rolling and pitching were awful, so that we kept our feet only with supreme difficulty.

Because of the weather and the speed we were making, the skipper decided to get the ship hove-to after dinner, rounded her to on the port tack, and sounded constantly without finding bottom. Navigation under these circumstances is no easy matter, and I was glad I was not responsible for the safety of the ship.

Alternating running and heaving-to, with the sounding machine constantly at work, except when it broke down—as it sometimes did—we went on, until at eight o'clock on April 4 the sun appeared and a clear horizon showed, so that it was quite possible to get chronometer sights and double altitudes, by means of which our position on the watery waste was definitely fixed. That comforted everybody; and by way of added solace, shortly before 1 p.m. land was sighted again—the snow-capped peaks of South Georgia showing plainly on our starboard bow. Throughout a drizzling afternoon, with a strong wind blowing—typical South Georgian weather, observe, for the bit of sunshine was soon only a memory—we crowded on every possible ounce of steam and tried to gain harbour, but because of the short, high head-sea that was running we made little if any progress. At six p.m. it became necessary to keep the *Quest* off with staysail and mizen set; and all that was then to be seen of the island was a blanket of thick, impenetrable mist, with the occasional ends of



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giant glaciers and the irregularities of the coastline showing.

A lot of bergs were floating about in our neighbourhood, and during the night the ship was kept under steam in order to make her handier in dodging these floating masses; but at 8 a.m. we set every inch of canvas the vessel would carry and headed up towards the land. By about three in the afternoon we were fairly close in, and it was a great pleasure to look on green grass again, though by reason of its sparseness it was almost possible to count the blades.

South Georgia hadn't altered much during our absence; the only change was that, winter coming on, there was more snow on the hills and a general suggestion of greater bleakness. And now, for the first time in many months, we saw shipping again: whalers leaving harbour or making for it. Other human beings besides ourselves existed, and the knowledge warmed our hearts. Absent yourself from your kind for months at a stretch, and even an African bushman seems a friend.

But we couldn't make harbour yet, and were compelled to dodge the bergs and idle about off the land because the wind had fallen light, except for frequent willie-waughts coming gustily down from the ravines of the island, throughout the beautiful, moonlit night, which was as much a poem as that famous sunset I mentioned before, though the colours to-night were silver and grey, rather than crimson and gold. A big iceberg, lit up by a noble moon, looks like an enchanted castle; and as you watch it you find yourself thinking of long-drowned Camelot and the wonders of the Round Table.

## CHAPTER XVI

### South Georgia Again

AT six o'clock next morning, all sail being then taken in and the ship proceeding under engines alone, boilers fed with blubber, we entered Leith Harbour, and anchored with both anchors as a precaution against the violent squalls that strike down from the hills.

Almost as the cables ceased their rumbling, a motor-launch was alongside bearing Mr. Hansen, of the whaling station, and Mr. Hussey, who had been appointed guard of honour to our well-loved leader. Mr. Hussey gave us all the news, which we were very greedy to hear. He had taken Sir Ernest Shackleton's body to Monte Video, with the intention of escorting it home to England for a great public funeral, such as a man of our Boss's heroism deserved, but Lady Shackleton had sent word that she desired the remains to be laid in an even more fitting resting-place—in South Georgia, the gateway to the Antarctic which he had by right of conquest made his own; the spot closely associated with one of the greatest of his many great exploits—that memorable journey in the dead of winter across the glaciers and rocky heights of the island, of which the whole world knows.

And so, over in the old pathetic graveyard of Gritviken, he was buried simply, the Shetland whalermen carrying the coffin, with no funereal pomp and circumstance, and the bareheaded Norwegian sea-fighters following him respectfully to his last resting-place. It was what he would have wished.

When the rocky grave was filled in, a simple wooden

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cross was erected, and on its arms Mr. Hussey placed the wreaths brought from Monte Video on behalf of Lady Shackleton, Mr. and Mrs. Rowett and the members of the *Quest* expedition. So the restless soul found rest at last; but his memory must endure, for Sir Ernest Shackleton was brave, not with the sudden hot courage of battle, but with the quiet, determined bravery that lasts through terrible, tedious days, when hope drifts sullenly away and leaves bleak despair.

But though his labours were ended, ours were not; much of his original programme remained to be carried out, and in order that this might be done, work was resumed with vigour under Commander Wild. Accordingly, after hearing Mr. Hussey's news, all hands turned-to to clear the bunkers of the gear that had been stowed there aforetime; and whether it was the hard work or the change from recent ice surroundings, I know that, for one, I found the weather quite sultry and overpowering. Really it was very cold, but we began to wonder where we could lay our hands on tropical clothing, by reason of the thickening of our blood.

The general view of Leith Harbour gave me the idea of a smooth lake surrounded on all sides by abruptly rising hills. Short, precipitous glaciers come down at short intervals towards the shore; the lower steeps are splashed with snow, whilst the raw earth shows abundantly, though here and there is a heartening patch of green. The greater heights are eternally snow-bound, and as often as not veiled in mist and thick clouds; and there is practically no flat land whatsoever; the whole island seems to stand on end, with the exception of a few acres at the far end of the harbour where the noisome whaling station lies.

Peaceful days followed, during which we worked hard and played as hard. Some of our party went fishing, and returned with great catches of coarse fish which

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compared unfavourably with the toothsome spoil of our northern waters. We played football; overhauled the ship fore and aft, aloft and below; entertained the Shetlanders with impromptu musical evenings, and generally joyed in a return to moving life. The weather was Scottish in its changeableness: sunny days alternating with bleak misty days, so that it was almost possible at times to believe that one was back at home and the happenings, at the best, but a vivid dream.

Whaling proceeded with great activity during this present stay of ours in South Georgia; whales were constantly being towed in and flensed, and the white smoke from the trying-works hung constantly over the busy station, whilst the reek of rendering oil was appalling. Fishing, in which sport I indulged frequently, proved an easy occupation, especially amongst the thick kelp which everywhere clings to the coast. All that was necessary was to drop over a hook with a piece of fat blubber attached, and a second or so later came a tug, and there was a fat fish. So greedy were these rock cod that often they would bolt the bare hook and not trouble us to rebait.

By way of a change from sport, I blacked down the rigging with tar and made a filthy mess of things in the process, smearing as much of the delectable mixture on myself as on the rigging, I think, and earning a severe choking-off for dropping tar on our immaculate—or nearly immaculate—decks.

Bridge in the evenings, with music, honest work, plenty of play, and there you have the record of our South Georgian days. One pleasant break, however, came when I was ordered away in the whaler with Mr. Douglas, Mr. Wilkins, Major Carr and Mr. Jeffrey, for a survey of Cape Saunders at the entrance to the harbour. We were towed by a greasy old motor-launch

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which the Norwegians employ for towing the whales about the harbour, but it gave us headway enough for our purpose. A heavy sea was running, however, and this made it impossible for us to land on the cape itself, so we turned back and got ashore a mile farther inland where the going was easier on account of a bit of smooth beach. Having landed—it was very hot clambering up the rocks—we took observations enough to satisfy the most critical of surveyors, then returned, but the weather having become worse during our activities, we got a thorough drenching before we regained the ship.

On Easter Saturday, April 15, we left Leith Harbour. The battered old *Neko*, a disreputable packet, entered harbour from Deception Island, her holds crammed to bursting with oil barrels, and, thanks to our wireless, we gave her G.M.T. as we steamed past her, for which she was very grateful as her chronometers had not been rated for long enough. It was cold as we steamed down the harbour; and the mountains, from which much of the snow had departed, were covered with drift. We were bound for the Stromness whaling station, which lies at the end of another arm of the bay; and on arriving there we went alongside the Norwegian steamer *Perth*. Our manœuvres must have seemed clumsy to her crew, for a sudden gust of wind drove us down aboard her with such force that our bowsprit fouled one of her boat-davits and snapped like a match; so that next morning Dell and myself were early at work repairing the damage, stripping the broken spar of its tangle of foot-ropes, guys and outhauls, and the like. Here at Stromness we had fresh relays of visitors, both from the shore and the British steamer *Woodville*, which lay there; they wondered how we'd managed to win clear of the pack ice down farther south. Most of our after-guard went aboard the *Woodville*, where they were royally treated; but as the cook had departed

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on a holiday I helped Jimmy Argles and Oompah—a South African, whose real name was Young—to prepare lunch for the forrard party.

During the night following this day of carnival the wind increased to hurricane force again, and I was roused at 4 a.m. by the skipper yelling for a cork fender. His cries were almost drowned by a great crashing and rending; but the noise was the worst part of the business. We were rolling and churning against the *Perth*, thanks to the pressure of two whalers which lay outside us, but after they'd cleared out, the worst of our troubles were over. At ten o'clock we gave the *Woodville* a salute with our ensign and moved off, housing our boats in readiness for the rough weather that was only to be expected.

Out in the open we washed down, and as our hose was somewhat the "waur o' the wear" we all got a satisfactory drenching, as a reminder that we were seamen and not shore-fellows. We entered Prince Olaf Harbour during the afternoon, where we tied up to a buoy. There is another whaling station here, and the backing of the great pinnacle rocks is very fine indeed. At 4 p.m. we went alongside the tank steamer *Southern Isles* and made fast for the night, during which the rain sluiced down in miniature Niagaras. Still, the rain laid the dust somewhat, which was a good thing, for our particular job next morning was to coal ship, and that as everyone knows is an uncleanly operation. From after breakfast until 5 p.m. we were hard at it: taking aboard 53 tons in that time. Argles, Young, Ross and myself shovelled on deck; three Portuguese trimmers from St. Vincent did the trimming below. To-day was Commander Wild's birthday, and so, once we were bathed and presentable, we had a great dinner by way of celebration. After dinner he came down aft, where we drank his health generously, Jimmy Dell proposing a

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genuine sailor's toast, "Long may your big jib draw," and the night died away in song and story, in preparation for another muling day at coaling, which became hard work on account of the bright sun and considerable heat. But by noon we'd bunkered ninety tons in all—our quota; and after squaring up the decks and washing down I went fishing with Mr. Jeffrey and the skipper of the *Southern Isles*. During the day a large number of whales were brought in, and their swollen pink carcasses surrounded us on every hand, whilst their effluvia—phew! Whales and still more whales continued to arrive during the night, giving promise of a plentiful oil supply; and some of the whalers that entered were towing six whales apiece, each one as big as the ship itself.

But we cleared out of the immediate vicinity of the whales after breakfast and lay off Bird Island, a small, pleasantly green piece of land, where was plenty of tussock grass. Here we anchored, and whilst letting go the port anchor a joining shackle fouled in the compressor and broke short off like a carrot, so that we lost a good anchor and fifteen fathoms of cable. Mr. Wilkins and a few others went ashore in search of albatrosses, with which mighty birds the place was literally alive, many of them wheeling splendidly overhead or hovering like watchful hawks, whilst others squatted peacefully on the little hillocks which are their nests; though certain less peaceful members of the community squabbled fiercely, squawking like fishwives all the time, with their huge wings outspread to their utmost span. From a distance their uproar sounded precisely like the indignation of a world full of young pigs all being led to slaughter at one time.

Young albatrosses are good eating, and we killed some to replenish our larder. It was Commander Wild's intention to remain here at Bird Island—well named—

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for several days in order to carry out an exhaustive survey, but the weather was not fair enough to permit our lying there, so we put back to Prince Olaf Harbour, there to await more favourable weather.

With good weather we got under way, housed the surf-boat, and steamed out into a moderate sea. We headed towards the bank at the north-west of the island, where we took exhaustive soundings, and the *Quest*, as though glad to be free from smooth water, gave an excellent display of liveliness. Lord! how we grew to loathe her dirty movements! It is easy enough to write of them in retrospect, but whilst they were happening our wearied bones and aching muscles caused loud protest in real deep-water curses, such as would have joyed the soul of the old-time Paddy Westers who went down to the sea in ships in a day when seafaring was seafaring.

The decks were thoroughly awash before very long, whole water piling methodically aboard at every roll and pitch; but spite of all this, having reached the bank, soundings commenced, and every hour, day and night, the machines were busy.

Maybe a brief description of the whole art of taking comprehensive soundings may appeal to the more scientifically minded of my readers. The skipper sets the ship on a definite course, and along this course we are steered steadily, with the lead constantly going, the depths ranging from one hundred to two hundred fathoms, until we fail to find bottom at three hundred. Knowing then that the ship is no longer above the bank, course is altered until soundings are picked up again; and so, by dint of a series of criss-crosses over the sea, the exact size, depth and relative shape of the bank is quite accurately learnt. Sounding is a delightful job, especially when you turn out for it during a cold, bleak, windy middle watch. The proceedings being illuminated by a flaring hurricane lamp, away goes the lead,



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one man "feeling" the wire as it whines over the lead, until there comes a sudden slackening of tension, whereupon the feeler cries, "Bottom," and another man applies the brake, not suddenly for fear of mishap, but gently, collecting the strain by degrees. Then it is necessary to wind in the wire and weights by hand; and at "three hundred fathoms and no bottom," on a deck that is as nearly vertical as ever a ship's deck could be, with the ship curvetting friskily and water cascading aboard, it is excellent exercise. Watches of this kind can become very long and dreary.

It took three full days and nights of steady work to get an accurate charting of the bank, but when Commander Wild was satisfied that the work was thoroughly done we made back to Prince Olaf, and, anchoring there, had lunch in placid waters, greatly to our contentment of spirit. Our prayers of thankfulness went up high, they were so fervently uttered.

We remained at Prince Olaf for one clear day, spent chiefly in violent political arguments amongst our very mixed ship's company; and then returned to Leith Harbour in heavy snow squalls, which covered the entire coast with glittering white. Fierce blizzards blinded us as we entered the harbour; and as the steam whistle lanyard carried away and I had to repair it, I found that my idea about the warmth of these latitudes was all wrong; it was cold—cold!

So strong was the wind that three attempts were necessary before we moored to the buoy. The winter now being properly set in, South Georgia looked a God-forsaken place enough to sadden any watching eyes.

On Friday, April 28, a general holiday was decreed for all hands. Fishing was attempted, but returning to the ship the boat was caught in a blizzard that necessitated a hard, cold pull; and the rest of the day was gorgeously spent in my bunk, delightfully reading

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and sleeping—with, perhaps, more sleeping than reading.

In Leith Harbour we rigged a new bowsprit to replace the one carried away and replenished our stores, and on May 2 left for Gritviken in very squally weather, the launch pulling us clear and the people ashore firing a salute of rockets. The last thing I heard as we moved off were the cheers of the honest Shetlanders. Outside the weather was glorious, and Mr. Wilkins put down his dredge, bringing up some beautiful samples of maritime life. Arriving at Gritviken at 1 p.m. we anchored with our big spare anchor, which required the entire ship's company, together with half a dozen tackles and Portuguese windlasses to get overside. In the evening I went ashore with Commander Wild, Dr. Macklin and Dr. McIlroy to the magistrate's house for a game of billiards. The magistrate, Mr. Binney, owned a remarkable dog, whose favourite diet appeared to be cigarette ash.

On May 3 a great work was commenced—our offering to our dead and revered leader. A great cairn was to be built on top of a high, noble bluff, commanding a magnificent view of the bay; and accordingly a large party put ashore, armed with shovels and picks, and, borrowing a couple of sledges from the magistrate, proceeded to the summit of the bluff. Mac commenced at once to dig out foundations; and as there were no suitable stones at hand, we others climbed a steep slope and quarried out the side of a hill a quarter of a mile away. Despite the labour this entailed we all worked with a will, for there was a definite feeling in all that Shackleton himself was directing our efforts as of old. His spirit seemed to hover over us, and we exulted in our tribute.

Mr. Douglas attempted to blast the rock nearer the side of the cairn, but had no success; so we continued

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our work all day, bringing the stones down the hill on the sledges, and by evening the cairn was three feet high.

Immediately after breakfast next day we went ashore again to continue our labours. Young ice had formed overnight on the water, and pulling the boat was no easy task. In order to expedite our work we lashed boxes on the sledges to increase their carrying capacity, but Dr. Macklin's sledge came to grief at the foot of the slope and he had perforce to return to the magistrate's for another. Up and down we went as hard as we could go, and in the course of the forenoon transported about ten tons of rock. Mac made an excellent job of the building, and whilst we ashore toiled hard, the engineers aboard fashioned a noble cross, and this was erected on the summit of the cairn in the afternoon.

On the day following the finishing touches were put to the cairn, and a brass plate was cemented in, bearing just a simple inscription, which said more than whole volumes, maybe :

SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON,

Explorer,

Died here January 5, 1922.

Erected by his comrades.

It was evening when this work was done, and in the waning light we gazed on the completed cairn standing out dark against the snow, and felt how grand and beautiful was its setting. How fitting it was for a monument to Shackleton! The dying sun made a lovely picture on the smooth frozen waters of the bay and enhanced the exquisite beauty of the white mountains beyond. We turned away and walked slowly homewards, not speaking much, because he seemed to be very near.

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We left Gritviken on May 7—a Sunday—and steamed across to Cumberland Bay. On the way we passed Sir Ernest's cairn, and the ship's company stood to attention facing it in salute. The skipper afterwards remarked to me on the excellence of the selected site. It promised to stand there as a perpetual landmark to all who entered the bay. Gradually was lifted the inevitable pall of sadness that had clung about the *Quest* after our sorrowful labours.

At Gritviken we had secured a live black and white pig, and an instant hostility arose between this porker and Query; it was very amusing to watch their antics. Commander Wild went ashore with a hunting party and presently returned with four large deer, a welcome prospect of venison. They were skinned and cleaned and lashed up in the rigging. Next day, after landing the magistrate's dog, which had somehow been left aboard, we steamed along the coast towards Royal Bay, where the German Antarctic Expedition of 1892-3 had wintered, and here, shortly after 2 p.m., we dropped anchor quite close to a great glacier that was rotten with crevasses. Great masses of ice kept constantly tumbling down with a continual rumbling, and as they entered the water they sent out waves towards us like the wash of a giant ship proceeding at full speed. The whole bay was covered with growlers and smaller fragments of ice. The surveying party promptly went ashore, and I accompanied them. A biggish surf was running, and the shore was very steep and very stony. Youthful enthusiasm prompting me to leap ashore with the painter, a roller promptly took me off my feet, carried me under the boat, threw me up on the beach and effectively drenched me. I returned aboard, changed and went fishing, which was a more peaceful pursuit. Then the survey party was collected without mishap and taken off aboard, the boat was hoisted in and secured,

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for the last time our anchor was hoisted from the South Georgian bottom, and we set out on our journey to what is almost the last, loneliest sentinel of the British Empire, Tristan d'Achuna, or Tristan da Cunha; the spelling is optional, I believe. We kept a course along the moon-path, in order to avoid the growlers; and before I turned in at midnight I took a last long look at shimmering, moon-bathed peaks of the stern island that now meant so much to me.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A Spell on Tristan da Cunha

OUR passage across to Tristan da Cunha was in the main uneventful to men who had endured the rigours and inclemencies of the more southern waters. True, there were episodes. The *Quest* was as dirty as ever, if not dirtier, when she met the long run of the seas; and Gubbins Alley was deeply awash with the water we took aboard over our swinging rails. Gubbins Alley, let me explain, is the name given to the port alleyway, where by some strange process of maritime luck and forces all the litter of a ship—the dirt or, as it is called, the “gubbins”—manages to accumulate. No one is to blame for this accumulation; it is merely chance that collects it, for the alleyway is religiously scrubbed out every morning; but the cook works a lot here, and the stokers empty the ashes from below on this side, so these activities may have something to do with it. But, whatever the reason, it is always just “Gubbins Alley.”

Down below was also very damp and ungenial, for despite all our defences the water insisted on penetrating into the wardroom, whilst Commander Wild's cabin was clean swept more than once. The ship seemed determined to show what she could do. She tried to roll the surf-boat out of its davits, and almost succeeded—would have done, if Mac had not raised the alarm and called us to his aid in the nick of time. She tried with success to roll us out of our bunks just at the hour of deepest sleep, when things of that sort appear anything but humorous. Sometimes we thought she possessed the temperament of an elf, but mostly she

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was diabolical. She flung breakfasts, lunches and dinners off the tables into the scuppers; she shifted carefully-stowed stores; she scalded the stokers and half-buried the trimmers. A very lively packet.

Storms beset her with monotonous regularity; but one storm is so like another to the lay mind that it is not necessary to enter into intricate details. One outstanding feature of these restless days was the souring of certain of our stores. When diving into the store-rooms to make preparations for the supplies for landing parties at Tristan and the adjacent islands, we discovered that several bags of flour and beans were going wrong, due, no doubt, to the constant dampness and lack of ventilation. The stench was appalling as we hoisted up the rotting stuff to open air for drying and disinfecting.

But at last, after a boisterous passage, we sighted Inaccessible Island on May 19, and this island we passed about four bells in the middle watch. The morning was dank and misty and but little could be seen, but when our watch came on deck at 4 a.m., Commander Wild had already sighted Tristan ahead, though it was now obscured by a dense black cloud. Shortly afterwards the weather cleared, and we, too, saw the island looming black and lonely out of the fog some three points on the starboard bow. By half-past seven, being within half a mile of the shore, we fired a rocket to attract the attention of the islanders, or, what was perhaps as likely, to arouse them from slumber. It was raining heavily by this time. — Presently three boats put out, and, pulled by eager hands, swiftly came alongside. The islanders clambered aboard in a great hurry, and were all over the ship in a moment, crying to each other in high-pitched, squeaky voices. Queer though their intonation was, however, their English was quite good. They were but poorly clad, clothes being one

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of their greatest wants. In a few of these people the dark strain is very apparent, but the majority are pale of face and not at all unpleasant to look upon. On the sandy beach a bevy of women and children and dogs turned out to give us greeting.

From where we lay the island presented a very massive front, the land rising precipitously a thousand feet or more all along the water's edge, and then sloping away to the summit, some six thousand feet or so higher. At the north-west end there is a stretch of low land like a raised beach, where the settlement of thatched cottages lies. These, with their vegetable gardens in front, look very like the cottages found in the Highlands of Scotland. The whole place is very green, especially where the houses are, and on the steeper slopes the bare earth shows a reddish colour, and small shrub-like "island trees" grow quite abundantly. A little to the left of the settlement is the sandy spit where the boats are beached. These boats are commodious, if not particularly elegant, and are made on the island, being constructed of a stout wooden framework and a covering of waterproofed canvas.

Once aboard, our friends were not at all slow in asking for what they wanted, offering to barter goods of their own creation in exchange, for there is no money in the island. To them calling ships are fabulous store-houses of wealth, sent specially to them by a beneficent Providence—to be emptied of everything they contain for the islanders' immediate benefit. More insistently even than the St. Vincent cadgers they pester one mercilessly for gifts—gifts of any and every sort; and if any member sternly refuses to part with his most cherished belongings they seem hurt and somewhat aggrieved. Not that the islanders ask for things for the mere sake of asking; I give them credit for better instincts. They are deplorably lacking in many necessities, and luxuries



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are hardly known to them. Clothes, timber for building, implements wherewith to till a soil that is unquestionably fertile, tools of every kind, tea, sugar—these are the things they lack and seek.

In the matter of exchange they displayed a naïve ignorance of relative values, and each individual established his own standards of value, urging one to be quick before the others came along and altered the market.

"Mister," one smooth-tongued islander said, "have you got a mouth-organ to give me, or a pipe, or some old clothes? I wish to be fair, and in return I will give you a penguin skin, or a skein of home-made wool, or a sheep, although some of our sheep are sorry specimens." Dr. Macklin was actually offered a perfectly good sheep for a single stick of tobacco! Well, what can you do with such innocents? They seem as trusting and simple as the penguins themselves; a primitive people, unspoilt by intercourse with a prosaic, matter-of-fact world, betraying the natural qualities of untutored mankind. You give them everything you can spare, of course. In return they promised us a bullock, three sheep, a pig, a number of hens and geese, and two hundred eggs—if they could find them!

After the boats came alongside we steamed closer inshore and dropped anchor in eight fathoms of water, in the middle of a thick field of kelp. After breakfast the rain ceased, and for the rest of the day the weather continued mild and warm, although the calendar told us it was officially winter down there. I've known many a summer's day in Scotland that could have learned much from Tristan da Cunha weather!

Our forenoon was spent in hoisting on deck the stores and the mail-bags and parcels we had brought out from England for these islanders.

Oh, you who sit at home at ease, and grow fretful

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if the postman is a minute late on his rounds, think of those who depend for news of the outer world on chance exploring expeditions which might call every two or three years or so! Imagine a land that concerns itself not at all with the sensational murder of yesterday nor the pending divorce case of to-morrow, but learns vaguely, long after the last echoes have ceased to ring in the ears of a staggered world, that there has been some sort of a war in Europe! But the seasickness of one of the visitors, due to the *Quest's* rolling—we seasoned fellows did not notice it—was of infinitely greater importance. “‘Solid as ocean foam!’—quoth ocean foam!”

Next day certain of us went ashore to have a good look round this far-flung patch of civilization. We had been warned to have a care; that, owing to the paucity of men, the women of the island had a husband-hunting look in their eyes; and so, naturally, we walked warily. There is an ancient deep-sea legend to the effect that a distressed sailor, sole survivor of a deplorable wreck, was washed ashore at Tristan da Cunha in a state of unconsciousness, and wakened to find himself firmly married to most of the eligible females of the island!

Our first visit was to the graveyard. Most sailors, I notice, do visit graveyards first when they go ashore in foreign ports. I don't know why, unless it is to envy those who lie comfortably asleep instead of being compelled to disturb their slumbers at every turn of the tide.

Tristan da Cunha's graveyard was not a picture to dazzle the sight. I thought it very dilapidated. Some few of the graves were indicated by crazy crosses, but the large majority were hardly to be distinguished from the surrounding earth. One, it is true, had a wooden slab at the head. The grave of John Glass, however, a native of Kelso, and the first settler—the Robinson

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Crusoe of the place—was dignified by a marble memorial stone. Other nameless graves were defined meagrely by square-cut blocks.

Tristan da Cunha boasts a good water supply, for it lies in a region of much cloud, and many small streams, born in the higher lands of the interior, flow noisily through the little settlement. Through the ages these streams have cut deep gorges in the rock and look like miniature cañons. All around are boulders, washed down from the hills by the torrential rains that lave the island in the wet seasons; and some of the houses are built crudely of these boulders, which lie ready to hand. The problem of acquiring a house here is a simple one. You carry a few stones to a selected site, pile them together, say the result is a house; a house it is within the meaning of the Act, and as there are no destructive critics to say, "It's like a house, but is it a house? Where's your visitors' bathroom and the lounge hall?"

Not that all the houses are so ambitiously built—small stones from the beach serve as building materials in many cases; but, even so, Robinson Crusoe would have envied these islanders their dwelling-places. Lying as the island does right in the track of storms, indoor embellishments are easily obtained. If you live there and have the desire to make an ornate home for yourself, you wait until the next ship is wrecked and collect such timbers as come ashore; with these you panel your *pied-à-terre* and look down tolerantly on your less fortunate neighbours.

It is whispered that the prayer of the really ambitious Tristan da Cunha bride before marriage is: "God bless father, God bless mother, God send a mail steamer ashore before my wedding-day!"

But, crude though some of the homesteads are, each one boasts its kail-yard at its front door, its extent

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marked out by a fragmentary paling. There is good soil, and in skilled hands the land could be made lucratively fruitful.

Locomotion is two or three hundred years behind the times. The strident "honk-honk" of the motor horn is unheard in the land. The name of Ford is unknown. I believe there are so-called savages in Moroccan deserts who fully appreciate the subtleties of the latest Ford car story; but the simple people of Tristan da Cunha have never seen a Ford. Could anything convey a more perfect impression of their remoteness?

When an islander desires to transport himself or his belongings from one point to another he employs a rough wooden cart with solid wheels, rough-hewn from virgin timber, and drawn by placid oxen. There is no lack of livestock. They number their kine by the score and their sheep by the ten-score. Donkeys are there and dogs, cats in abundance, and thrifty, succulent geese.

Women and children dress quaintly in an old-fashioned way, wearing long, loose garments that would either drive a Parisian *modiste* crazy or else make her famous as the creator of a new mode. All of them wear vivid red or yellow handkerchiefs tied about their heads, according to the fashion established by the buccaneers of the Spanish Main in 1680 or thereabouts.

Talking to one of the inhabitants, whose name was Henry Green—a dark-complexioned man, whose short, curly black hair gave a hint of African blood—I learnt that the worst months on the island were August and September.

The cattle then become very poor and die off from exposure on the hills. There are no adequate shelters for them, though material to construct such shelters exists in abundance; so they stray abroad and die.



Scout Marr presents Sir Robert Baden-Powell's Flag to the Tristan da Cunha Troop.



We go in Search of Fresh Food: Scout Marr (left), McIlroy, Commander Wild, Dr. Macklin on the shores of Cooper's Bay, South Georgia.



The *Quest* off Inaccessible Island.

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Further, the islanders have but few agricultural implements wherewith to develop the island's resources. Given the advantages of civilization, I believe they would make Tristan da Cunha a blossoming garden; as it is, the place struck me as being derelict.

Of wood worth while there is none; island wood, cut from the trees, is useless save for burning purposes; but occasionally the sea-gods are kind and throw up on the beaches masses of driftwood from sinking ships. There is turf in abundance, and a little honest hard work would enable the people to protect their cattle thoroughly. However, hard work and they seem to have had a quarrel some time ago, and, judging by the evidences, the quarrel does not yet appear to have been made up.

Whatever else the island lacked, it boasted a troop of Scouts, inaugurated by the Rev. Martyn Rogers, who, with his wife, devotedly immured himself in this far-away wilderness with an idea of bettering the lot of the islander population. This troop promised well, and the honour was given me to present it with Sir Robert Baden Powell's flag, especially sent out for the occasion. I accomplished the ceremony in due form, regretting that I lacked the ability to deliver an inspiring speech; and after it was all over—after I had inspected the Scouts and endeavoured to tell them what scouting really meant—I accompanied the parson and his wife to their vicarage and took tea and damper-bread with them.

Mr. and Mrs. Rogers made light of the hardships, but it was given to me to realize how brave a work they were doing. Delicately nurtured, they had willingly sacrificed themselves in order that the work of God might progress. And only those who have actually seen with their own eyes the conditions of life in Tristan da Cunha can realize what these devoted Christians

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undertook when voluntarily they cast themselves away on this isolated patch of wave-swept land.

After dark we returned to the *Quest* and weighed anchor immediately, preparatory to starting for Inaccessible Island, taking with us three Tristan volunteers as guides. But first crack of dawn showed us that the weather conditions were entirely unfavourable for a landing on this island; accordingly we ran for shelter to Nightingale Island, about nine miles distant, and anchored there in a good lee. Nightingale Island is very much smaller than Tristan, though the latter is not enormous, measuring as it does only about twelve miles by eight. Our immediate destination was very little more than a single sharp peak rising some two thousand feet into the air, with lush vegetation of tussock grass and bracken. There is no lack of bird life; thrush-like birds, finches, skua gulls, mollymauks and petrels are abundant enough to please the most enthusiastic ornithologist; though save for the birds the island is uninhabited, being merely visited occasionally by Tristanites in search of driftwood, which is the most valuable harvest the sea gives them. Thus these inhabitants of the loneliest populated spot on all the earth's surface benefit by the misfortunes and sufferings of others, for driftwood only results from wrecks; and the fragments of many a noble ship have gone to benefit these poverty-stricken outliers.

A landing party of Wilkins, Douglas and Carr, together with myself, left the ship in the surf-boat; we got ashore with difficulty at a spot where the rocks rose sheer from the sea; but there was a narrow ledge at a negotiable height which gave us a chance of a rough, wet scramble to terra firma and enabled us to land our scientific and lethal equipment after a more or less breathless struggle.

We climbed a short way along the jagged rocks with



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our baggage, and came to a flat, table-like area backed by high cliffs, with gigantic boulders at their base. The geological party went right on up a narrow gully, with the intention of inspecting a guano patch at the farther side of the island; we others remained on our tableland for a while whilst Mr. Wilkins shot a few birds, then we followed up the hill. From the ship we had thought this would be easy going up a grassy slope. We were sadly disillusioned, however, for the grass was rank tussock and grew high above our heads, being some six to ten feet in length, and gave the effect of a miniature jungle, being extraordinarily difficult to break through. I was surprised at the activity of John Glass, one of the islanders who had accompanied us. He was a man of over fifty, and he climbed with the agility of a mountain goat. Under foot the ground was rotten and soaking, and at every second step it gave way, so that we sank knee deep and farther into the loathsome boggiess. Mr. Wilkins, scoffing at danger and discomfort, continued to shoot birds as we laboriously progressed; but though his aim was good the reward did not always follow, as by reason of the long, tangled grass his victims were not always found. By the time we reached the top we were drenched to the skin; but, having achieved, we looked breathlessly about us on an openland of small trees and loose rock, with a peculiar kind of round-bladed grass which grew in close tufts, very difficult to walk upon. Here more birds were shot, and then, all parties satisfied by the exploration, we returned, sliding down the soaking, rotten earth, stumbling blindly through the long tussock, and slipping with monotonous frequency into the gaping pot-holes, all of them full to the brim with water. We were glad to reach the ship again to get towelled and changed.

For the night we lay off about a mile from the island

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under easy steam, in order to keep clear of the rocks. At four o'clock, when I turned out on watch, it was raining very heavily; a depressing morning, the crash of surf on the near-by land dominating all other sounds. As soon as it was considered safe we put closer inshore again, feeling a very cautious way with the hand-lead, because of the indifferent surveys of these waters, and dropped anchor once more amongst the kelp in fifteen fathom water. Mr. Douglas and Henry Glass—another islander—we landed on Middle Island, a small rocky patch of land a hundred yards or so off the coast of Nightingale Island. We who remained on board had an exciting forenoon fishing for sharks—good sport. Our earliest intimation of their being in the neighbourhood was when the cook, fishing with ordinary line, brought a small shark to the surface; afterwards, with a good heaving line, we managed to haul a round dozen of the brutes aboard—not giants of the breed, but considerable fish of six to eight feet in length. We also caught shoals of other fish, edible and inedible, for the waters about these islands literally swarm with finny loot.

After fishing my fill I helped Wilkins to skin and clean the birds he had shot, turning, as was my habit, from sailor to naturalist, enjoying the change immensely. A trip aboard the *Quest* ought to qualify any man to undertake any job known to civilization, and a few that aren't!

At eight bells in the afternoon the boat pushed off for the shore, and, as it was by now blowing a really stiff gale, it had a thin time in making the island. The shore party were taken off with enormous difficulty, at cost of thorough drenchings; but we were lucky in having the islanders with us during this operation, for their knowledge of the intricate channels and the really dangerous rocks enabled us to avoid catastrophe, which

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threatened many times. They were excellent boatmen and seemed entire strangers to fear.

At four o'clock next morning anchor was weighed for Inaccessible Island; and during this short passage the *Quest* outdid all previous rolling performances—thanks to the stern and unanswerable bidding of a high ground swell that ran heavily abeam. I thought I knew the length of the ship's foot; I thought it was impossible for her to astonish me, but this time she did it; and a dozen times or more I was certain nothing could prevent her capsizing. As it was, she tossed me lightly out of my bunk—at least, I left it lightly, but gained the deck heavily—so I thought the best thing to do was to go on deck.

Seen from a distance, the island well earns its name, for it looks inaccessible enough to deter the stoutest hearts. No low land is apparent, the whole rising sheer out of the fretting water; a green, more or less oblong mass with nothing inviting about it. The boat was got ready, stored with food and utensils and gear enough to last the landing party for several days, as the continued inclemency of the weather rather pointed to the fact that a return to the ship at our own sweet will might not be possible. Two alpine axes were added to the outfit, and a coil of rope, together with the complicated instruments necessary for biological and geological work. The landing was effected without mishap, although the beach was both steep and stony, and big, noisy rollers were breaking thereon with a stern determination and soul-curdling roars. Still, surf-bathing is a hobby with some people, so we managed to dodge the worst of the white-crested combers, running in between them, thus getting ashore with no serious wetting.

The beach extended for about three-quarters of a mile on either side of where we landed, the rock rising

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sheer and forbidding at the ends of the comparatively level stretch; but throughout the entire mile and a half ours was the only safe spot for getting ashore, as elsewhere the rocks were big and the surf very tumultuous. Behind this narrow strip of beach the rocks rose vertically all along to an average height of four hundred feet or thereabouts, and no doubt these conditions determined the first discoverers to give the place its name. Rank tussock was growing in the greatest abundance everywhere, and high up on the skyline "island trees" were faintly visible. But anything less like the desert island of romance it would be difficult to imagine. Half a mile to the left of the landing-place a narrow waterfall came tumbling over the edge of the cliff, three hundred and fifty feet up, and splashed and roared into a deep pool gouged from virgin rock by its own play. Beyond this the slope was slightly easier, and there Mr. Douglas and the two men from Tristan who accompanied him made the ascent with the greatest difficulty and no little daring. They followed the old Alpine plan of using the rope to overcome all obstacles.

As mountaineering was not in my own immediate programme, I assisted Mr. Wilkins with bird-shooting and photography—gentle sports compared with the efforts of the others. By 3 p.m. Mr. Douglas had returned, after having fixed the contours roughly and ascertained the greatest height for the purpose of the finished survey.

We arrived back on the *Quest* by four, anchor was weighed at seven; thereafter an exhaustive series of soundings were taken, and certain errors in earlier surveys were rectified. At breakfast time we anchored in Falmouth Bay, Tristan da Cunha, where we were promptly besieged, as before, by swarms of curious islanders, who gave us as much attention as though we were a strange ship arrived for the first time.

## A Spell on Tristan da Cunha

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In order that the isolated denizens of this lonely isle should know in future what events progressed in the outer world, Mac and Watts went ashore to erect the mast for the Reverend Rogers's wireless aerial. I busied myself with shipwork, though the pig hampered me greatly by an insistent determination to thrust her snout into my wash-bucket. Oompah dredged over-side and caught a young octopus, surely the ugliest brute on earth, a veritable devil-fish, bright red in colour and with arms full three feet in length—an ugly customer to tackle even then; so what its great-grandfather could have been like is best left to the imagination. We had him crawling lopsidedly about the poop for a time, where he looked like some creature of an evil nightmare; and then, when we'd tired of his ugliness, he was handed over to Mr. Wilkins, who entombed him in a noble jar of methylated spirit.

In the afternoon Naisbitt, Oompah and I went ashore, to discover Mac and Watts, more or less assisted by a hundred or so of the islanders, trying, with the aid of tackles, ropes, improvised sheerpoles and Portuguese windlasses and the like, to raise a sixty-foot hollow steel pole into a vertical position. With a patch on a patch and a patch over all, as they say at sea, they promised to be successful. Amid a breathless suspense the structure was elevated—up and up, swaying like a fishing-rod; but at the critical juncture the principal contraption buckled and broke, the islanders flying like chaff before the wind; and as the damage was irreparable, the experts had to content themselves with erecting about two-thirds of the original length and hope for the best, though I doubt if even now the Tristan da Cunha wireless station is functioning to any epoch-making extent; for Mr. Rogers admitted that he had not mastered the Morse code and was ignorant of not a few technical details.

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We three holiday makers continued on our journey, after suitable jeers at the mechanics, in the direction of the island's potato patch; but as we failed to discover this historical spot we made the best of it, caught three donkeys and rode triumphantly back to the settlement, named after a nobler city—Edinburgh. John Glass met us, bidding us welcome to his home with tea and pumpkin pie, which were joyously received and rapidly consumed. He is by nature a very fine gentleman, this islander. He entreated me not to be shy. I am rather shy, as a matter of fact, but never until John Glass, himself a shy man, perceived it, did I realize quite how shy.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Among the Islands

A RISING swell and indications of increasing bad weather caused us to hurry our departure from Tristan da Cunha; and when the whistle was blown in warning the able-bodied population flocked aboard in a last desperate determination to rid us of all our surplus gear. Perhaps they were not to be blamed—they were mentally half-grown children, no more—but by their behaviour on this occasion they undid any good impressions we had formed of them. Greedy? That wasn't the name for it! Unashamedly, with clutching fingers, they started in to scrounge whatever they could see. It was rather disappointing, I must confess. Of gratitude for our earlier bounty they betrayed no trace whatsoever. They had promised us fresh supplies in return for the enormous amount of stores we had freely given them, but only at the very last did they reluctantly disgorge two skinny sheep which were hardly worth taking aboard.

One party of the steadier elders brought off mail-bags and oddments of parcels for us to convey to Cape Town. They had forgotten to address the parcels, and, when told of it, seemed to think we possessed sufficient second sight to deliver the goods at the required addresses. So active did they become at last that Commander Wild was compelled to order them back into their boats, where they went sulkily, like whipped children; but the narrow conditions of their lives, the hardships they everlastingly endure, may cause these weaknesses of character. Anyhow, we left

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them to their drear isolation, and in drenching rain, with the ship's decks woefully littered with the gear the islanders had disdained to convey below, we put to sea on the next lap of our journey—towards Gough Island.

An orgy of cleaning and stowing followed, in order to get the ship in trim to face expected bad weather. Mr. Wilkins dredged for samples of the sea's bottom, but, alas! the dredge wire parted and all his trouble went for naught. Sounding regularly every hour, through grey, bleak, thick weather, we journeyed on, and, with the mist thickening, judged our chances of even sighting Gough Island very remote. Nevertheless, we sighted it dimly through the thickness early on the afternoon of May 27, and by eight bells in the afternoon watch were close up with it. At first a dense mist bank hid all of it, saving only a hundred feet or so, but the mist soon lifted, and, sailing a hundred and fifty yards off-shore, with the hands in the chains continuously sounding, we saw a fairly lofty, rugged island with varied vegetation. The outstanding feature of this island was the large number of spires and minarets that seemed carved by the hand of man from the immemorial rock; there were sharply pointed peaks, too, in quantities, and many of these stood out like clustered chimney-stacks against the sky, so that an impression of dense population was conveyed. Over the cliffs, which for the most part rose sheer from the sea, small streams fell in perpendicular waterfalls, as they do in Norway, so I was told; and the wind, blowing hard, scattered these cascades into white clouds of feathery spray, infinitely beautiful, long before they reached bottom.

Shortly after dinner we came to anchor in a bit of a bay at the north-east end of the island, where a beautiful and very densely vegetated glen opened in-



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vitingly to the sea. Near by the water had cut a tunnel through the cliffs, forming a natural arch of some magnificence; such arches we found were fairly common around the coast. This snug valley branched and branched again into innumerable smaller ravines and gullies, with thick growth a good three-quarters of the way up the slopes, merging into what appeared to be an open grassland, which continued to the summits of the highest peaks. Out from this open land, in full view of the ship, there rose a very singular peak of dome-like rock, absolutely bare, with precipitous sides, standing well clear of all the rest of the land, and looking curiously like some noble monument erected to the memory of the sailormen who had perished in these wild latitudes.

Whilst coasting along close inshore we had sighted several other anchoring grounds, though none of them, possibly, so good as the one we had selected; and we congratulated ourselves on snug moorings as we busied ourselves with preparations for landing. After a very early breakfast the boat was lowered and stowed with instruments—geological, meteorological, biological—with tents, clothing, cooking utensils and stores to last for a stay of four or five days. Mr. Douglas, Mr. Wilkins, Major Carr, Argles, Naisbitt and myself formed the landing party, Commander Wild taking charge of the boat with the two doctors and the chief. The water was delightfully clear and calm, and landing was a comparatively easy matter to seasoned veterans such as we had now become. A few yards back from the stony beach were two small huts, one an unlovely structure of corrugated iron, its roof lashed down to ensure against the risk of being blown away by the furious gales that rage here almost all the year round. The second hut was a rude but substantial structure of rounded stones from the shore, and looked

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like a relic of prehistoric times. Even its thatched roof, which had come adrift in places, suggested uncared-for antiquity. And all around and about these two shacks lay the debris of a deserted flyaway mining venture—pickaxes and shovels, pans and sieves, a centrifugal machine, a pump and suction-hose. Various food stores and cooking utensils were lying about in both huts, and in the iron erection we found a cooking-stove in good working order. We pitched our own tent securely and stowed all our gear away in the sound hut, enjoying all the sensations of those making unexpected discoveries; for what all this assortment of derelict gear actually meant was something of a mystery. It showed, however, that the place had been visited at no very distant period; the general impression was that a search for diamonds had been conducted here. A box half-filled with matches was found; we struck one and it ignited immediately, a surprisingly good advertisement for the tightness of the hut whence they were collected. Then, in a little cave to the right of the huts, we discovered a stone bearing an inscription, "F. X. Xeigler, R. I. Garden, J. Hagan, W. Swaine, J. C. Fenton : Cape Town : 1/6/19," showing that years had elapsed since this futile quest had been abandoned. No further evidence offered; the exploring party, apparently having searched here and searched there for precious natural loot, seemed to have dumped down their tools, disheartened, and gone clean off the map.

The glen was interesting; we divided ourselves into parties to explore it, each party taking a separate branch. In the bottom of the valley a torrent brawled and tumbled amongst large boulders, and trekking up this path was a difficult and arduous matter, as Wilkins and I found to our cost. But in the blessed name of scientific research obstacles only exist to be overcome, and on we went. Many trees of island wood greeted

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our eyes as we progressed, and what struck me particularly was the number of extremely beautiful parasites which grew thickly on these trees. Wilkins secured samples; very fragile they were, and of great length, their colour being for the most part a pale yellow-green.

After proceeding a mile the stream fell over a precipice into a narrow gorge, so, striking off sharply to the right at this juncture, we climbed a slippery slope of rock covered with a soaked matting of mosses. This slope soon became almost vertical, and our way was beset with difficulties. We had to dig our feet into the wet mould, which fetched away continually from the bare, dripping rock below, or else secure precarious foothold on the short tree-ferns, which themselves were very insecurely rooted. But there was all the thrill of discovery in the adventure; it was just like exploring a perfectly deserted island on which we might be required to exist for unnumbered years; and the feeling that the unexpected was going to happen round every corner was very strong.

Thus, after struggles unending, we reached the summit, one of those rugged pinnacles we had observed from the ship prior to landing. Even at this considerable height the vegetation was profuse, whilst on every side the land rose in similar steep and rugged eminences. From this vantage-ground we were able to discern the easiest route to the island's summit. For the first fifteen hundred feet it lay through the thick growth of the glen and the left branch of the left fork. Then our best way appeared to be to take to one of the grassy ridges which separated the innumerable gullies and ravines converging on the main glen. Having discovered so much, we also discovered that the day was so far advanced that it was time for us to make our way back to camp; and the return journey was not such hard going as the outward venture. For myself,

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I simply slid down the greasy moss helter-skelter, breaking up every now and then by clutching—and up-rooting—a tree-fern. Mr. Wilkins preferred shooting waterfalls to this method, but there was not much to choose between the two, both being equally wet and equally rapid. After dinner most of the shore party indulged in an orgy of mice-hunting; for the huts swarmed with the little beasts—the only living relics of the mysterious expedition whose traces we had discovered.

At six the following morning we all roused out and had a gorgeous dip in the stream—cold but invigorating—and then squatted down to a most delicious breakfast of burgoo and bacon (burgoo, as the initiated know, is sailorese for porridge). Immediately thereafter the work of exploration was resumed, both parties joining forces until we reached the first fork in the glen, where we separated. Mr. Douglas took the right branch towards the huge natural monument of which I have spoken before, Mr. Wilkins the left, according to the route we had mapped out the previous afternoon. As the vegetation was dripping wet we were quickly and thoroughly drenched. We tried for the most part to keep to the bed of the stream, but as we constantly encountered perpendicular and unnavigable waterfalls, we had to take to the slope again and break a tedious way through big tree-ferns and island wood.

At last we came out on the open grasslands about two thousand feet up, and here we made better progress. Mr. Wilkins shot a few finches in true castaway fashion, to heighten the impression of our being shipwrecked mariners; and once, hearing a loud cheeping, thrust his hand into a hole and brought out, pecking and fighting protestingly against the unceremonious usage, two large birds of the petrel family. He also took specimens of a very unusual plant that considerably

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resembled a young fir tree. There was little else to be seen here, so we came to a halt a few hundred feet from the summit, on a small flat ledge where was a providential pool of rainwater. Here we lunched on biscuits and sardines, washing down the cold collation with draughts from the pool, in drenching rain. I have eaten uncomfortable meals under different circumstances, but never in all my recollection have I eaten one in less pleasant conditions.

Nothing was to be gained by going farther, so we descended, sliding as on skis downwards because the ground was so wet and slippery. Battering again through the vegetation, which was for all the world like walking up to one's neck in water, we gained camp late in the afternoon, as woebegone a pair of objects as even a desert island could expect to produce. Robinson Crusoe on first landing wasn't a patch on us, and the Swiss Family Robinson were fashionable members of highly civilized society as compared with our sorry selves. We promptly kindled a huge fire at which to warm and dry, Major Carr and Argles shooting large numbers of sea birds, which the vivid blaze attracted. By dint of exercising a little imagination it was easily possible to believe that we were the survivors of some maritime disaster waiting—waiting for the appearance of a friendly sail, constantly alert against attack by bitterly hostile savages.

The next day it was blowing hard and promising bad weather generally. A big surf was running, and Commander Wild, finding it impossible to land with the boat, had to yell his instructions to us on the beach, so deafening was the noise of wind and breaking water. In addition to instructions he threw us delicacies—crayfish and Naisbitt's pipe. Naisbitt welcomed the latter as a mother does her long-lost child, for, lacking this vital necessity of civilized existence, he had fashioned a

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wonderful and fearsome affair, which he treasures to this day—a pipe composed of a chunk of driftwood and a stalk of tussock grass.

Early in the afternoon the geologists set out with the intention of gaining the ultimate summit. Towards nightfall the weather became pronouncedly worse, and the wind, sweeping down the gullies with hurricane violence, made us wonder if the island itself would remain firm on its foundations. Rain and hail accompanied the wind, and away above the peaks were white and glistening with driven snow. A wild, bizarre night enough; and the sensation of being marooned and left to our own devices was very strong, by reason of our lack of communication with the ship, which was only occasionally visible through the noisy squalls. What was happening to the geologists upon the distant peaks we could only surmise. As there was nothing to be done to succour them, we turned in at ten o'clock, amid the thunderous flapping of the tent's canvas, which battered about at such a rate that we felt certain it must inevitably carry away. We were right. At four in the morning it did carry away; a whole side was blown out. In rushed the storm, roaring its delight at having penetrated our inner defences. We had perforce to turn out, collect our belongings and store them in the hut, where we continued our sleep with philosophical calm, except for the irritation of the mice, which scampered all over us and evidently thought we were manna sent from heaven for their especial benefit.

The morning breaking somewhat better, Commander Wild was able, with careful handling, to bring the boat ashore and effect a landing, taking off Mr. Wilkins and Naisbitt and their baggage. Naisbitt, who is the unlucky man of the ship, contrived to carry out his usual act of falling overboard whilst helping to ship the stores. Giving me a rifle, they left me alone on the beach, to

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soliloquize in Selkirk fashion as best I cared. I had a very pronounced Robinson Crusoe feeling, I must admit—and the rifle failed to bring comfort to my lonely soul, for there was nothing to use it against that I could see.

Standing on a lonely beach, holding an unnecessary rifle, struck me as being waste of time, so I set to work, in true castaway style, to employ myself—in making a meal. Food plays a large part in the economy of desert-island life, and I was no exception to the rule. I experimented to the extent of boiling a number of flint-like ship's biscuits until they were quite soft; then I poured off the water, put in some baking-powder, and pounded the lot into a solid mass. Adding salt, pepper and other condiments, I placed the mixture in one of the mining pans, which I had previously smeared with dripping, and, inverting another mining pan on top by way of a lid, proceeded to bake my impromptu pie. I am in nowise disposed to brag about my culinary masterpiece, but it really was quite good to taste; and I pass on the recipe for *Pi à la Gough Island* to such potential castaways as might happen to read these pages. The dish is cheap and uncommonly filling—considerations worth while when lost to the resources of the outer world.

Whilst I was busy, Query, who had accompanied us ashore and followed the geologists, turned up, accompanied by Argles. Argles was full of details of a bleak, comfortless night spent on the hill; he told how, when starting for the summit that morning, he had fallen down a steep place, so that he hurt his side and was compelled to turn back. I sympathized, fed him, and we awaited the return of the rest of the party, which occurred later in the day. Both Mr. Douglas and Major Carr were very excellent imitations of drowned rats; their woes clung thickly to them; their faces were blue

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and lacking laughter. They'd reached the top, however, where they had been able to do some useful work regarding surveys of the other peaks.

We turned in for that night on the floor of the hut—no more experimenting with fragile tents for us, thank you—and the mice carried on their best entertainment for our benefit, scampering about us, over our faces, over our blankets, everywhere. One wakened me at break o' day by nibbling my nose; and deciding that discretion was the better part of valour, we surrendered their citadel and turned out. We packed up everything, as Commander Wild had determined to take us off this day or perish in the attempt; for it was quite on the cards that if he failed to-day a favourable opportunity might not occur again for weeks, or maybe months. As Gough Island offered scant entertainment either for body or mind, we were quite determined to run all reasonable risks to regain the *Quest*.

The boat arrived about 8 a.m., and Commander Wild was craftily bringing her inshore, slacking away on the anchor rope to prevent her being smashed, when he saw the danger of the scend of the surf lifting her and banging her bottom down on the unkindly beach. He pulled off and made for the lee of a high cliff, which we ascended after landing, with the aid of ropes, hauling our gear to its summit, afterwards lowering the lot down the other side and sliding down the ropes ourselves. Query presented a problem, as even a South Polar dog can't negotiate ropes; but some bright genius thrust him into a sack and lowered him down willy-nilly, Query making no end of a fuss of it all the while.

Fierce, very fierce gusts were coming away down the glen with a loud screaming as of hordes of fiends, and the surface of the water was curdled with spray, whilst the spindrift hurtled in blinding clouds. Pushing off, we gained the *Quest* after a stiff pull, and the



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ugly old packet seemed to smile us a genial welcome, so homelike did she appear to our eyes.

Anchor was weighed and we steamed along the coast for a short distance to where a narrow island rose like a gigantic pillar out of the sea for about two hundred feet. There the surf-boat went ashore again, but, though a nasty swell was running, she came to no harm, because a dense bed of kelp provided an ample buffer if at any time we hit a boulder too hard. In the meantime Jimmy, who is a man of varied accomplishments, slew the pig.

Accompanied, so it seemed, by his dying screams we got under way for Cape Town and the joys of civilization.

## CHAPTER XIX

### Asail for Home

THESE days, I find, occupy little space in my diary. Nothing at all happened out of the recurrent round of work and watches, beyond my suffering from some sort of illness created by a too greedy indulgence in succulent crayfish. We spent some active hours day by day in "treacling up" the ship for the critical eyes of possible visitors; and as the ship was steady and the conditions were good, time passed pleasantly indeed. There was a genuine homeward-bound feeling about everything. We had done most of our work—unexciting and unromantic maybe, but useful from the scientific point of view; we had surveyed certain hardly known lands and seas; and we felt we deserved some few of the ameliorations of an ordinary world.

Certain rumoured reefs were supposed to lie in our track, and very assiduously we worked with the sounding machine to verify these potential dangers to shipping; but no evidence was forthcoming. Two thousand fathoms gave us no bottom, and a reef buried deeper than that below the sea's surface wasn't likely to do much harm to passing ships.

After a delightful period of calms and smooth seas the wind breezed up again, and the *Quest*, awaking like a startled horse from long sleep, renewed her old-time vigour and enthusiasm. The wind was fairly ahead, and with engines going their hardest we could make but little more than a knot an hour. A dreary passage promised, but after a while the wind freed, and under sail, with engines stopped, we ramped along in

## Asail for Home

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heartening style. But on June 9 a real tragedy occurred—Query lost the number of his mess. During the voyage he had got very cunning in the tricks of the ship and had developed excellent sea-legs, so that we never felt very much concern about him even when the *Quest* was playing her most fantastic tricks. I was assisting Dell to skin and cut up a Tristan da Cunha sheep—a very scraggy brute, with only about enough flesh on its bones to form a decent meal for one healthy Scout. Query, who always followed the work of the ship with sagacious interest, was absorbedly watching our gory toil when the ship gave a sickening lurch, and the poor dog, before he could brace himself into a state of readiness, slipped, clawing and scrabbling, clean over the side. I heard Jimmy crying out, and running to the poop saw Query bravely swimming in our direction; he was fully fifty yards astern. Then, as I looked, my heart aching for him, a big wave hit him and shut him from view. It was impossible to do anything for him. Had he been a man his fate must have been the same, for we were running hard before a gale, and to heave-to might easily have spelt our complete destruction; to lower a boat was impossible. Poor Query! His loss was felt very keenly by every man aboard, for there is something in the atmosphere of a ship that makes a man keen on pets, and Query was a great pet, well loved by all. I have known many dogs, but never one with so lovable a disposition as his. And so of all the medley of animals carried by the ship during her voyage only one solitary cat remained.

On June 17 we got into wireless touch with Cape Town—by telephone, so please you—and heard all the news that had happened during our prolonged absence from the busy world that makes the news. It was like coming back into life after a Rip van Winkle existence. We heard of the ascent of Mount Everest, the sinking

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of the *Egypt*—the big ship lost, while our puny cockleshell survived more hazardous days than had ever befallen the liner!—and all the sporting news worth while. At noon we faintly discerned flat-topped Table Mountain ahead. The sea was smooth; we were sailing under ideal conditions; a strong elation was ours. We planned our adventures amongst men of our own kind; wondered whether the Cape Town girls were pretty; hoped they'd secure a good grip on our tow-rope and that they'd pull their hardest; and generally indulged in fantastic daydreams, as is the way of sailors the world over, though steam has done its best to kill romance. We celebrated this day of days by an uproarious concert in the ward-room, and all of us, I think, went rather mad.

Going on deck at midnight was a sheer delight; a wonderful sight presented itself. The night was perfect—still, serene; and a big silver moon shining gloriously on the vast expanse of Table Bay vied with the glowing lights in the distance. The ship was just creeping along in order to make her anchorage at daylight. Round our quietly moving bows, in the luminous wake as well, hundreds and hundreds of phosphorescent fish were playing recklessly, shooting like shafts of vivid light through the water, and the soft-sounding “wash-wash” of their breaking surface, a sound which blended so perfectly with the low seething rustle of the broken water of our progress as to seem like fairy music.

A great reception awaited us in the morning. Dense crowds packed the quays, and many boatloads of enthusiastic people followed in our wake as we trudged up the harbour. As we steamed to moorings off Robben Island I thought gratefully of the wonderful experience I had had; and although I was very sorry it was almost over, yet within my heart I was glad indeed to be here, for I

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know of no more splendid emotion than the home-coming after a great adventure. We had tried and we had achieved; but sorrow underlay the joy, too, for this reception was Sir Ernest Shackleton's triumph, and he was not there to share it.

During the following days the people of Cape Town gave us generous greeting and unstinted hospitality. We spent a memorable week-end at Bonnivale, the estate of Mr. Rigg, situated about 200 miles from Cape Town—no distance at all in a country of staggering distances—and had grateful experience of the honest Scottish hospitality of Mrs. A. H. Smithers, of St. James's, who received us royally at her home, allowing us to come and go precisely as we pleased. Wherever I personally went the Scouts were kindness itself to me, and my great regret was that I had not sufficient time wherein to see as much of them as I could have wished. For I owed my great adventure to the fact that I was a Scout, and gratitude to the organization that gave me my chance must always be uppermost in my heart.

It would be utterly impossible for me to write of the many distinguished, generous people we had the honour to meet, of the countless functions we attended or of the impressive, interesting sights we saw. What with lunches, dinners, dances, motor drives and the like, Jack was ashore with a vengeance and thoroughly enjoying himself; whilst, considering the people—thousands of them, literally—whom we had to conduct over the ship, it is a marvel to me how we managed to get a full day into every twenty-four hours. Every day was a red-letter day on its own account; and I must always remember our stay as a truly wonderful month.

Toward the close of our stay we moved down to the Naval Dockyard at Simon's Town to refit; but Commander Wild, prostrated by a severe attack of influenza, was unfortunately unable to accompany us there.

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Thus, after much delight, we left Table Bay on July 13 very hurriedly, and once more faced the elements. Not very trying on this occasion, however, for the weather was beautifully fine; though, thanks to our high living when ashore, certain of us began to realize that seasickness, a thing forgotten, was still a real affair. Nevertheless, across a sea as smooth as glass we pursued our way, until South Africa dropped below the horizon and our visit was nothing but a golden memory—a memory that set one longing to be possessed of wings, to fly back and continue the prolonged farewell.

Once fairly at sea, I learned to my keen regret that we were homeward bound—definitely homeward bound. I say “with regret” advisedly, for I had looked forward joyously to cruising amongst new seas, of seeing great new lands—Australia, New Zealand, and the romantic, colourful islands of the South Pacific. Still a journey of considerable interest was in prospect, and many a day would pass before we loomed in sight of English shores.

It was like yachting—yachting *de luxe*—as we steamed along placid seas, under broiling suns and cloudless skies. Pleasant travelling this, but we of the *Quest*, hardened to bad weather, occasionally found the lazy times a trifle boring. Not unduly so, mark you. We did not precisely pray for big gales and high seas, for we had had our share, and more than our share, maybe, of such happenings of ocean travel; but even lazy loafing about the decks with a book can grow monotonous, and a gale certainly provides excitement and the element of the unexpected.

Without any event of outstanding importance, following a placid round of commonplace duties, living on the fat of the land, since there was now no pronounced need to conserve our stores, cleaning ship diligently, fishing for albatross, taking occasional soundings and dredgings, we reached St. Helena and anchored off

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Jamestown. It is a pretty little town, which straggles picturesquely for a long way up the bottom of an acute-sided valley. The island itself is a mountainous mass, intersected in every direction by deep valleys, those opening to the sea in our direction being of a very regular V-shape. An exceedingly fertile land, its chief industry is the growing of flax. The natives are black, some being rather less so than others, and white people are few and far between.

Mr. Douglas and I rode across the island to inspect some dykes he had heard about, and on the way stopped at Napoleon's last abiding-place, his lonely home during his tragic banishment. We saw his tomb only from the distance, having no time for a closer inspection. The roads we negotiated were uniformly good, but at a certain point on the far side of the island, in order to reach our destination, we had to alight and lead our sturdy animals down the rough side of an extremely steep hill. At the bottom Mr. Douglas stopped and purchased some exquisitely dainty lace at a native cottage. St. Helena rather specializes in lace of delicate fashioning; its manufacture is an industry of some importance.

The dykes were situated beside a ruined Dutch fort which once guarded a small cove, and I wondered what feature of history this stronghold illustrated, but was able to secure no worth-while information on the subject. A few shattered cannon, crumbling to nothingness under the influence of the sea air, still remained—grim relics of a forgotten era in colonization. We stayed in the vicinity for an hour, Mr. Douglas taking many photographs and gathering various geological specimens. The country hereabouts was rocky and barren and not at all inviting. Having satisfied our lust for information so far as possible, we returned; it was already dark when we clattered into Jamestown. After months at sea, and to a man untutored in the art,

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riding was a painful business at best, and I was so sore by the time we sighted our destination that I could not sit in the saddle, but, jockey-wise, rode in the stirrups alone. Counting everything, I think my performance wasn't so bad—I only fell off once; but then, as I said, anyone who could exist aboard the *Quest* when she was up to her tricks could sit anything, even a drunken giraffe. Next day brought its penalty of adventuring: I was so sore that if there had been a mantelpiece aboard the ship I'd have eaten my breakfast from it. Lacking so unusual a table, I suffered in stoic silence, mentally anathematizing all horses; but the smart soon disappeared, helped by activities aboard.

The weather at this time was blazing hot, so hot that even to wind up one's watch was an exertion to be seriously considered for long half-hours at a stretch before completing the operation. Sweat ran from us in rivers, for we were all carrying flesh as a result of lush feeding on the passage from Cape Town.

My general impression of St. Helena was that it was a derelict island; its glory had departed. Its name rings down through the aisles of history, and will probably never be forgotten, for here the Corsican Ogre was housed in safety after peace was given to a war-ridden world; but it is its name that matters and not the place itself. However, I was very glad to have seen it, and it was easy to picture the ambitious Man of Destiny eating out his heart in a galling captivity, reflecting on the glories and triumphs that once were his.

We departed for Ascension Island the night Mr. Douglas and I returned from our equine gymnastics, and spent a fairly lazy time on the passage, for the heat was against arduous exertion. During these days the dominant feature of the seascape—a placid plain of shining water for the most part—was the enormous swarms of flying-fish that dashed away from the warn-



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ing of our thrusting bow and scattered wildly in every direction, rising foolishly into the air until their wings dried, then plopping and pattering back into their native element, to become easy prey, one supposes, to the voracious bonitos who are their natural enemies. We found amusement in endeavouring to coax the last lonely albatross that had accompanied us northward to continue its journey; but an uncanny instinct prevented it from venturing. It is said these birds will never under any conditions cross the Line, and this fellow seemed a living proof of the fact.

In the afternoon of August 1 we sighted the sharp peak of Ascension Island—where the turtles come from—and after dark we came to anchor a few hundred yards from the naval barracks. I went below into the hold to find some clean clothes, and the Chief, entering the ward-room, fell down through the open hatch. Under normal conditions he would have expressed his feelings with such words as occurred to him at the moment, and I should have wilted under his torrential profanity; but the homeward-bound feeling was evidently strongly within him, for he maintained a silence that was more pregnant than many words. He made a game struggle against his natural feelings and won—all credit to him.

During the war there was on Ascension a big wireless station, with a coaling station for our patrolling cruisers also; and the garrison of marines is still maintained, probably in readiness for the next war, or it may be that they have been forgotten. Anyhow, there the garrison still is, and also the Eastern Telegraph Company have a cable station on the island; so no doubt the two groups keep each other company.

Ascension lies very near the Equator, and is naturally hot. With the exception of St. Paul's Rocks it is, I think, the hottest place I have so far struck. It is an amazing contrast to St. Helena; utterly barren of

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vegetation except, strangely enough, on the very summit of the peak, which is 3,000 feet high or thereabouts, there is a single farm, which supplies the garrison with fresh meat and vegetables. For the rest the island is nothing but a monotonous series of huge red mounds of ashes and piles of clinker, due to the one-time extraordinary volcanic action here. There still remain some two dozen perfectly discernible volcanic craters, any one of which appeared ready to start into immediate eruption.

Early on the morning of arrival I accompanied Mr. Douglas ashore, clad weirdly in his garments for the most part, for hard work had taken a bitter toll of mine. We walked for a little while along the road that leads to the farm on the ultimate peak, and then struck off towards a hill known as Dark Slope Crater. The geologist had learned that there was some ejected granite to be found there, and was curious to investigate.

Our way led us across many piles of clinker, which emitted a strangely musical tinkle when we set foot on them. It was intensely hot; the scorched cinders struck through our boot soles as if they were merely paper. They say at Aden that there is only a single thickness of brown paper between them and the nether regions; the same remark applies to Ascension. On top of the crater we ate our modest lunch and inspected the crater itself—extinct, though suggestive. At the bottom was a yellow, sun-dried area like the bottom of a pond in a severe drought. Mr. Douglas took samples of this dried mud, thinking it to be fuller's earth, and no doubt dreamt of uncountable riches; he also got samples of the granite he sought. Having satisfied our hunger for the unusual, we entered Wideawake Valley, called by this unexpected name because it teems with millions of wideawake birds. When I say millions I mean millions; there is no exaggeration. It was nesting time,

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and the noise as we walked through amongst the sitting mothers was deafening, whilst the air was literally darkened by the wheeling, startled birds, who pecked gallantly at our headgear in the endeavour to beat off our innocent intrusion. Unfortunately they were in the right of it, for so thickly were the nests strewn on the open ground that we trampled eggs and so on into a hideous omelette in our progress, without in the least wishing to do anything of the sort.

From this yelling tornado of ornithological resentment we made a detour, the general direction being toward the peak road. Ascending a dried-up creek we came upon a beautiful specimen of a lava flow. The flow was in the act of rounding a bend, and was so good an example that Mr. Douglas took photographs and measurements. Ascension is, indeed, a rare spot for a geologist. Farther on I picked up half a volcanic "bomb," and a piece which might have been a "tear-drop." Mr. Douglas took samples from many striking dykes, one running for half a mile down the side of a hill. Every foot of the journey brought some new surprise, something of keen interest. A large mass of grey rock—trachyte, I think it is called—was weathered into fantastic shapes. We also found ejected gneiss, and the presence of this, together with the granite, supports the theory that Ascension is connected, under water, with the main African continent.

Presently we gained the peak road at "God-bethanked Well," a most appropriate name, for I was dying for a drink, as were unquestionably those who originally named the well. A long draught of cool water bred feelings of profound thankfulness in our souls.

At length, with what seemed at least a hundred-weight each of rock specimens slung on our backs, we arrived at the station, racing the swiftly falling dark-

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ness during the last lap of the journey, to discover that a mail-boat was in the harbour. Whilst awaiting the arrival of our boat it was interesting to watch the marines working by the light of acetylene flares; and there was superior joy in realizing our own immediate immunity from labour of this trying sort.

Next day, securing shore leave again, I dressed myself appropriately to the consuming heat that threatened, and Mr. Douglas and I pushed off for the land. When aboard ship for a long time even a naked rock promises a relief from cramped surroundings, and we welcomed these shore excursions very cordially. We started at once up the hot, dusty road to the peak, halting three miles inland at God-be-thanked Well for a relished drink and an equally enjoyed smoke. As the gradient began to steepen we encountered sparse vegetation—thin-growing grass and cactus plants, palms and casuarinas—which vegetation culminates in the fertile farmland of the peak. About two and a half miles from the actual summit we left the road and climbed a steep grassy ridge, but frequently crossed the main thoroughfare, which ascended in a series of remarkable bends. Emerging on the road at one of these bends we met a fine old gentleman in khaki shorts, with a horse and a little daughter. He was very tall, with silver-grey hair and a fresh countenance. This was Mr. Cronk, who runs the peak farm. With astonishing generosity he lent me his mare, which promptly bolted up the hill as I set foot in the stirrup, being exceptionally spirited from long confinement in the stable. Nor did she slacken speed, notwithstanding the steepness of the way, until she drew up with a clatter at the stable door. She gave me a hazardous passage, for every time she swung round a bend I was nearly off, retaining my seat only by dint of my sailor's grip.

At the farm we bathed and were entertained most

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regally, afterwards making our way round the left slope of the mountain, along a path cut with no little skill by Mr. Cronk. On the way Mr. Douglas poked his stick into what seemed very like an ordinary rabbit burrow, and a huge land-crab immediately emerged, ready for battle. He presented a most ferocious front, but decided that the odds against him were too heavy, so promptly retreated. We saw many more of these unsightly, nightmarish brutes. We made a thorough inspection of the country surrounding the peak, saw many strange sights, and returned to the farm, where Mr. Cronk served us with an excellent dinner; and then to bed. How deliciously inviting a landsman's bed can be!

The following morning, in clear sunshine, with a swift, cool breeze to temper the heat, we set forth again. Mr. Douglas promptly occupying himself with photography, secured some amazing views. The vistas were beyond description, and well worth recording permanently. One gazed on a scene which, except for the dirty yellow-white of the scattered patches of withered grass, had but little variation in colour. The dominant features were the bright red of the conical hills and craters and the darker brown of the piles of clinkers; and the impression conveyed was that one stared out over the raw world as it must have been almost immediately after the creation. Growing on the distant lower slopes were palms, casuarinas and green grass, and on the peak itself was an extensive vegetation of conifers, greener grass and bamboos, these last being on the very summit, sheltering a small pool made by Mr. Cronk.

After a breakfast to treasure in memory through many years—never were such delicious cold chicken, such sweet eggs, such vegetables and fruit!—we listened to our worthy host's pleadings that we should inspect a bridge of his own fashioning, and followed him along

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through tunnels and arches and cuttings, balancing ourselves on precarious ledges with sheer drops on the one side that terminated thousands of feet below, until we reached the bridge, which spanned a small gully and was composed of steel piping, cemented smoothly over and giving the impression that it had existed from time immemorial and would continue to endure for ever—a striking piece of work.

Those who gave the place-names to this island were evidently obsessed with a belief that the entire country owed its origin to Plutonic ingenuity. There's the Devil's Punch Bowl, there's the Devil's Riding School—this latter a peculiar crater, perfectly circular and looking from above precisely like a giant target that has fallen over on its back. There would seem to have been successive volcanic eruptions here, and the resultant deposits are laid out in concentric circles of varying colour, quite conveying the idea of the conventional target.

The flaming sun took toll of us during the return journey. My face, back, neck, arms and legs were baked bright scarlet when I boarded the ship at five o'clock, just before she weighed anchor; and in some way I'd picked up a temperature, too, which resulted in my being ordered to my bunk for the night.

But the temperature did not long endure; in the morning I wakened quite normal, to find the *Quest* in open water and practising her rolling evolutions with gusto. Beyond a few blisters and much smarting, my sunburn failed to trouble me. From Ascension we brought the beginnings of a menagerie—sailors must have pets of some sort—and in addition to a monkey and a canary we boasted quite a flock of young turtles, as proof we had visited Turtleopolis. We tended these fellows carefully, changing their water frequently and feeding them regularly on salt pork. This Saturday

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night, as had been our custom throughout, we drank the old navy toast of "Sweethearts and Wives," to which the inevitable joker solemnly added, "May they never meet!" an amendment as customary as the toast itself. We then turned on the faithful gramophone, suffering by this time from much hard usage, but still determined to do its best and producing quite decent music.

Next day we cleaned ship, and, with the wind dying down into puffs, encountered heavy rain, which gave us all the joy of baths. This being Sunday I took opportunity for a "sailor's pleasure," and turned out my bunk, which, from its peculiar situation just below the companion-hatch into the wardroom, seemed to be the harbouring-place of every oddment in the ship. The sum total of these accumulations is interesting. Listen: Sea-water, sea-boots, enamel plates and other eating gear, soup, salt pork and tinned fruit, and a sample of every article of food ever consumed aboard.

August 8 we crossed the Line again in blazing heat. During the uneventful days of the passage to St. Vincent we exerted ourselves faithfully in cleaning ship, washing her inside and out, up aloft and down below. She shone like silver as a result of our exertions, but we wondered what would happen to her when the coaling began. Still, aboard ship the hands must be kept employed, otherwise they might grumble and slack and grow discontented. When there's no other employment for them they clean ship and go on cleaning. Then the coaling crowd come aboard and take a diabolical delight in smothering her with foulness. Still, no bones are broken, so no one is any the worse.

The hours spent at the wheel during these fine-weather days were enjoyable in the extreme. With the sun shining across the easily rolling sea in a broad dazzling beam, and a cool north-north-east wind blowing gently six points or so on the starboard bow, the

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heat of the day is delightfully counteracted and sailing conditions are perfect. During such hours a man is allowed to think—those deep thoughts which cannot be put into so many prosaic words, but which lift the soul gloriously out of itself and teach one the majesty of God. One drifts aimlessly from subject to obscure subject, lost in a hazy dreamland of introspection, until——

“Hallo! What might you be trying to do with her? Write your name with the —— ship?” comes from the officer of the watch, and you spring to alertness and stare aghast at the loops and twists of the bubbling wake.

In due course we reached St. Vincent, and found it and the adjacent islands in even a sorrier plight than when we visited them on the outward journey, for the drought had spread to the neighbouring islands, and as they supply St. Vincent itself with cereals and vegetables and water, a condition nearly approaching famine existed. Throughout the day of our arrival we were surrounded by bumboats in charge of extremely ragged boatmen, who endeavoured to tempt us into buying their trifling variety of fruits. Certain of these enthusiasts varied their hours by diving for the chunks of coal which fell overboard from our coaling, and they inevitably secured their loot. We coaled ship, smothered ourselves in grime, bathed, and finally left St. Vincent on Sunday, August 20, in a whirl of excitement, firing rockets lavishly, and sent on our way by much cheering from women and children who had massed in a high place to see the last of us.

Placid workful conditions continued until, on September 3, we reached San Miguel of the Western Isles and anchored there. A very pretty picture this island presents from the sea, reminding one greatly of our own northern land—green fields, much vegetation, and



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regular walls. Going ashore here, I enjoyed a Portuguese Sunday—the busiest, most careless day of the week, apparently, for the cafés were all wide open and doing a roaring trade, and the streets were thronged with islanders dressed in their best, determined on enjoyment. A very different scene from Tristan da Cunha, let's say! I enjoyed this colourful scene immensely, it was such relief from the monotones which had been our experience for so many months. But all things have an end, and on Monday, September 4, we weighed anchor and headed out upon the final lap of the homeward trail. After certain sunny days we ran into screaming hard weather, with a fortunate fair wind that bade the *Quest* do her best—an order she obeyed, both as to speed and rolling. Her firm intention seemed to be to leave us with poignant memories of her activities in this direction. But we endured, and we blessed her for carrying us so far so worthily; and now that the hazards are past I retain nothing but the tenderest recollections of what we used to call in our wrath “that perishing old wash-tub of a rolling son of a gun.”

And so the closing stage of the memorable voyage approached. Long before there was even the remotest hope of our sighting England we commenced our packing, three parts of which had to be promptly unpacked; and then we painted the weird assortment of boxes which contained our accumulated possessions, and hoped they would look a little less disreputable than they actually did. Late on the evening of September 15 we crept into Plymouth Sound and dropped our anchor—an anxious anchor that had repeatedly tried to break loose from its moorings on the homeward trip—in Cawsand Bay. We were home—home from the great adventure!

On September 17, the anniversary of the day on which she had left St. Katharine's Dock a year before,

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the *Quest* was finally berthed and our work was done. Here in her resting-place I said farewell to the many staunch friends I had made and to the stout, plucky, wonderful ship that I had grown to look upon as a second home.

And now I can hardly believe that it was all true. Yet it *was* true—gloriously so. I, too, have seen and known and learnt; I, too, have companioned with the great souls who help to make our island history. Sir Ernest Shackleton, Commander Frank Wild and the others, all great of heart and fearless of soul, had been my shipmates and my friends.

It was a memorable year indeed, and for all time I know I must carry with me a vision of tumbling waves by day and phosphorescent breakers in the darkness; the grind and bellow of the closing pack, the rush and roar of broken waters at the growlers' feet; the hushed noises of the seals as they come to the surface in the still water of the pack; and always shall I see in mind's-eye the glory of the Antarctic night.

And most poignant yet inspiring of all my memories there is that of the lonely cross outlined against the whirling drive of the South Georgian sleet, the sign which remains to tell of the great spirit that led us forth into the Frozen South and died, yet lives again, as a magnet to draw the brave away from the sleek comforts of life into that outer world of daring where men may gaze in awe upon the wonders of the Lord.

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